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CONTENTS



DEPARTMENTS

8 FLASHPOINT

Are we saving—or selling out—our public lands?

12 QUICK HITS

Bear attack in Virginia • Polluted parks • Monumental tour • Eminem's running addiction

15 THE DIRT

Mitchell Triple Crown • Native brook trout restored to the Smokies

47 THE GOODS

The Scott Brothers select the best in bouldering gear.



54 TRAIL MIX

Drive-By Truckers are still rolling.

FEATURES

10 TOM'S CABIN

You can go home again to Thomas Wolfe's writing retreat.

18 TOO YOUNG?

Most kids are playing with Legos and dolls. A few are thru-hiking long-distance trails.

20 FEARLESS FALL FOLIAGE

Color is spilling down the mountains. Wanna find the best spots to catch it? Tackle one of our five most adventurous hikes for leaf-peepers.

29 WONDER WOMEN

Meet six pioneering females who are rocking the regional outdoor scene.

34 THE SECRET IS OUT

Bouldering in Boone and the High Country is no longer for locals only.

49 GHOST TOWNS

Explore the region's most hallowed haunts—abandoned moonshining communities, Renaissance castles, and even a pirate ship in Sherwood Forest.

Photo courtesy of Bill Crabtree Jr., Virginia Tourism Corp.

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CHATTER

10.15

SPEED RECORD RUCKUS

The A.T. has nothing to do with the ridiculous speed records and all the other narcissistic, titillating events that people conjure up and abuse the trail for. The A.T. is a footpath for those who seek fellowship with the wilderness. —*Doc, A.T. thru-hiker*

These speed hikers are obnoxious and ruin the trail experience for everyone. Instead of glorifying the record setters, you should glorify the guy who took the longest time instead. —*J. Tayloe Emery*

Every A.T. hiker sets goals for themselves: make it to the next shelter by dusk, or hike a certain number of miles, or reach Katahdin. All hikers are challenging themselves. What's wrong with speed hikers pushing their limits as well? —*Josh Miller*

NO BUNNY EARS FOR UN-HOUSED HIKERS

In "Coming Home," Jennifer Pharr Davis initially refers to the un-housed hikers as "hikers" in quotation marks, presumably denoting that the subjects weren't actual hikers at all. Later, she seems to change her mind, qualifying them without bunny ears, "Housed or un-housed, haughty or humble, once you take that first step, you are a hiker." I simply wish these folks were recognized as true hikers from the beginning. They are hikers of streets, of trails, of life. —*Nancy*



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The Conservation
Alliance
Outdoor Business Living Back in the Outdoors

MOST DANGEROUS OUTDOOR MOMENT?

**JOHNNY MOLLOY**

Making an open water crossing of Tampa Bay in a sea kayak during a small craft warning, with 30-knot winds repeatedly completely washing over me and the boat. I've never been so happy to reach dry land.

**JESS DADDIO**

Being caught in the middle of a flash flood above a 100-foot waterfall and watching my friend, who was wearing a fully-loaded, 50-pound pack, fall in the last pool above the lip. I don't think I'll ever camp in a "dry" riverbed again.

**LAUREN WALKER**

One time I almost had to go camping but it was cancelled.

**WILL HARLAN**

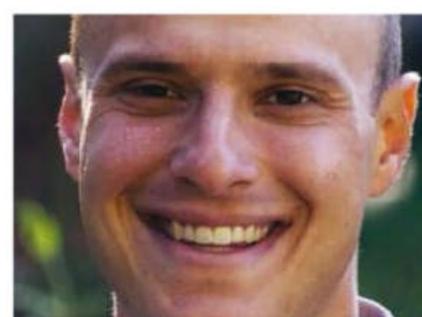
After being lost for two days without food or water in Mexico's Copper Canyons, I drank from giardia-infested cesspools and was held at gunpoint by an AK-47-wielding drug mafia. Good times.

**CURTIS WINSOR**

In 2008 I was part of a small film crew in Alaska filming grizzlies from 40 feet away and blue whales out in the open ocean tag-teaming their next meal. Despite a few tense moments, we did not get breached, and we did not get eaten.

**TRAVIS HALL**

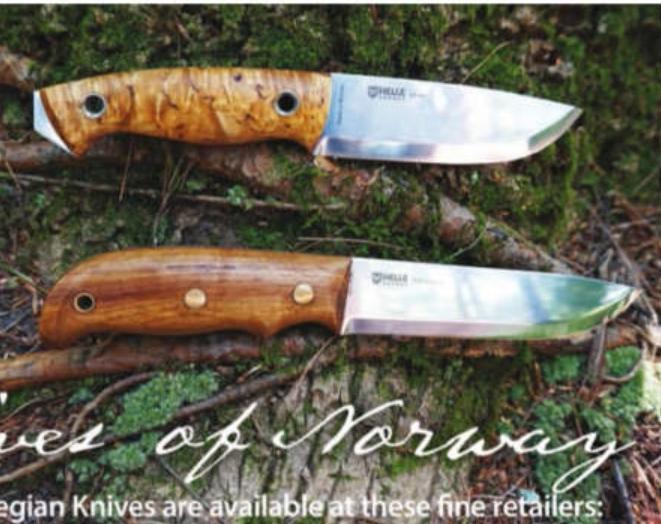
Being accidentally stranded by fellow Yellowstoneers on a mountain just outside Gardiner, Montana. After flagging down some locals for much needed water and hitchhiking along Grand Loop Road, I finally completed the 56-mile journey in time for my 6pm bar shift back at Lake Yellowstone Hotel.

**BRADLEY STULBERG**

I was on my first serious hiking trip—a long multi-day trek through the Himalayas. About halfway through, when I was literally closer to the top of Mount Everest than the nearest medical facility, the most painful, disabling stomach ache struck. 16 hours later, it finally got better, but that night was pure hell.



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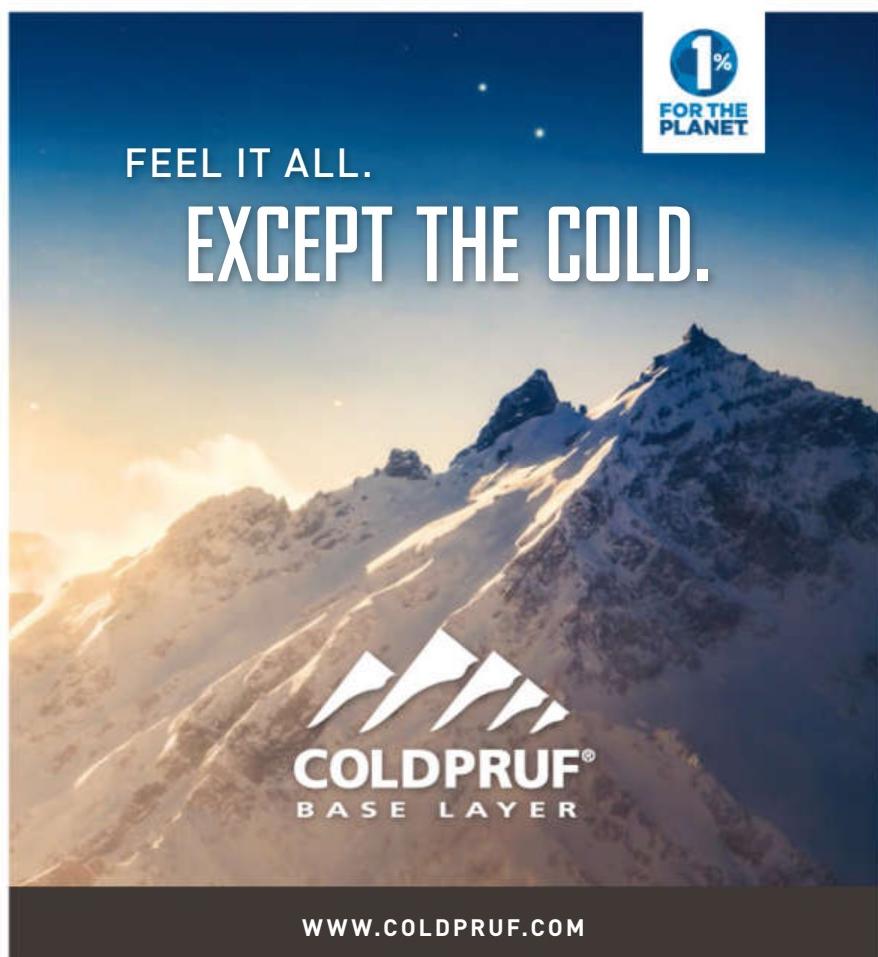
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THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

ARE WE SAVING—OR SELLING OUT—PUBLIC LANDS?

by JEFF KINNEY

Privatization and commercialization of public lands is increasing. More companies are being allowed to manage national forests and other federal and state-owned lands, and fracking and mining firms are often permitted to extract the minerals beneath. Partnerships between public lands managers and the private sector are also on the rise. For example, in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, one of the restored log cabins in Cades Cove is “brought to you by Log Cabin Maple Syrup,” with a plaque advertising the brand and logo.

What to think of all this?

Everyone knows our parks and forests are short on funds, but where should we draw the line between corporate money and public land management?

BRENT MARTIN, Southern Appalachian regional director for The Wilderness Society, is concerned about the potential harms of privatization and commercialization, especially over the long term.

WHAT ARE THE GREATEST POTENTIAL HARMS FROM PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC LANDS?

Martin: There are many, including a lack of oversight in environmental protection, overuse, unsustainable exploitation and depletion of natural resources, no guarantees of public access, and a lack of public input regarding management.

WHICH PUBLIC LANDS IN THE EAST ARE MOST VULNERABLE TO PRIVATIZATION?

I think that Eastern national forests are particularly vulnerable. National forests are the largest concentration of public lands we have and were acquired after decades of degradation and exploitation. The purpose of



RENOVATIONS FOR A CADES COVE CABIN IN GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK WERE FUNDED BY LOG CABIN SYRUP, WHICH RECEIVED AN ADVERTISING PLAQUE IN THE CABIN.



acquiring these lands after the passage of the 1911 Weeks Act was largely to protect watersheds from this type of degradation in the future. Since then, these lands have come to provide much more than watershed

protection, including protection of biodiversity, a wide spectrum of recreational uses, and special designations such as Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers. Any threat from privatization by default threatens the common good.

WHAT ABOUT AGENCIES THAT NEED THE CASH FROM SELLING PUBLIC LANDS, OR AT LEAST SELLING THE MINERAL RIGHTS? WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO PAY HIGHER TAXES TO KEEP PUBLIC LANDS PUBLIC AND THOSE MINERALS IN THE GROUND?

I'm not sure it has to do with a lack of money or having to pay higher taxes. It appears to be more of a political issue, and one that's partisan and driven by particular economic interests. However, if one of the states truly needed money, I would pay

higher taxes in order to protect public lands.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH A STATE OR NATIONAL PARK ALLOWING A PRIVATE COMPANY TO "SPONSOR" SOMETHING IN EXCHANGE FOR CASH? IS THIS PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP A REALISTIC WAY TO BRING IN MUCH-NEEDED FUNDS?

I don't think anything is necessarily wrong with the idea of sponsorships like this. I wouldn't, however, want a billboard inside a park advertising Log Cabin Maple Syrup, nor would I want the parent company influencing park policy. Also, sponsorship messages should be presented tastefully and not in an obtrusive or glaring manner. Sponsorships such as these could be a good way to raise much-needed money, but

there should be parameters on what the sponsors can expect in return, and it shouldn't diminish the visitor experience in any way.

RANDAL O'TOOLE of the Cato Institute supports arguments in favor of privatization.

IN YOUR VIEW, WHAT ARE THE MAIN ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF PRIVATIZING PUBLIC LANDS?

O'Toole: Public lands are poorly managed due to their ownership status. Lands are managed for their most politically productive, rather than economically productive, uses. But the political system encourages people to polarize the public in order to get the biggest share of the public-land pie. In contrast, markets encourage people to cooperate in order to produce the greatest net value.

ISN'T IT WRONG TO SELL OFF PUBLIC LANDS—which, by definition, belong to everyone—to the highest bidder?

Most public lands are dedicated to various special interest groups and don't truly benefit everyone. If they could be sold to the highest bidder, the revenues would help everyone by contributing to debt reduction or paying for other



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essential government services. For example, Forest Service studies have found that the market value of most public lands for recreation is many times greater than other uses combined. Recreation would be the dominant use if the lands were managed for maximum economic value.

DON'T WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO PRESERVE PUBLIC LANDS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS INSTEAD OF USING THEM FOR SHORT-TERM CORPORATE GAIN?

Public land managers often become just as exploitative of the land for short-term gains, especially when their agencies are allowed to keep some or all of the receipts from resource sales. Elected officials can rarely see beyond the next election, while private businesses have been known to sell 99-year bonds or make investments that aren't expected to pay off for decades.

EVEN IF JUST MINERAL RIGHTS ARE SOLD, WON'T THE EXPLOITATION OF THOSE MINERALS SEVERELY DIMINISH THE WILDERNESS CHARACTER OF MANY PUBLIC LANDS?

Open-pit mining can conflict with many other resources. But many minerals can be extracted in ways that aren't so damaging. Oil and gas production, for example, uses very little land. In private hands, the owners would balance uses among various groups and what they're willing to pay.

HOW FAR SHOULD COMMERCIALIZATION GO? SHOULD COMPANIES BE ALLOWED TO SPONSOR BUILDINGS OR EVEN GEOLOGIC FEATURES IN NATIONAL AND STATE PARKS?

Absolutely. Private sponsorship of recreation, scenic, and historic resources makes perfect sense. That doesn't mean spelling out Exxon or Shell Oil in giant letters on the landscape. But many museums and other urban facilities receive private donations, so there's no reason why public lands couldn't do the same. *

You Can't Go Home Again—But You Can Visit His Forgotten Cabin

by WILEY CASH

photo by DAVE DEBAEREMAEKER

I was a graduate student in Louisiana, where I hoped to become the writer I'd dreamed of being. But after moving to the bayou, all I could write about were the Blue Ridge Mountains. So I came back to visit my friend Thomas and his wife Amanda in Asheville, the home of one of my writing heroes: Thomas Wolfe.

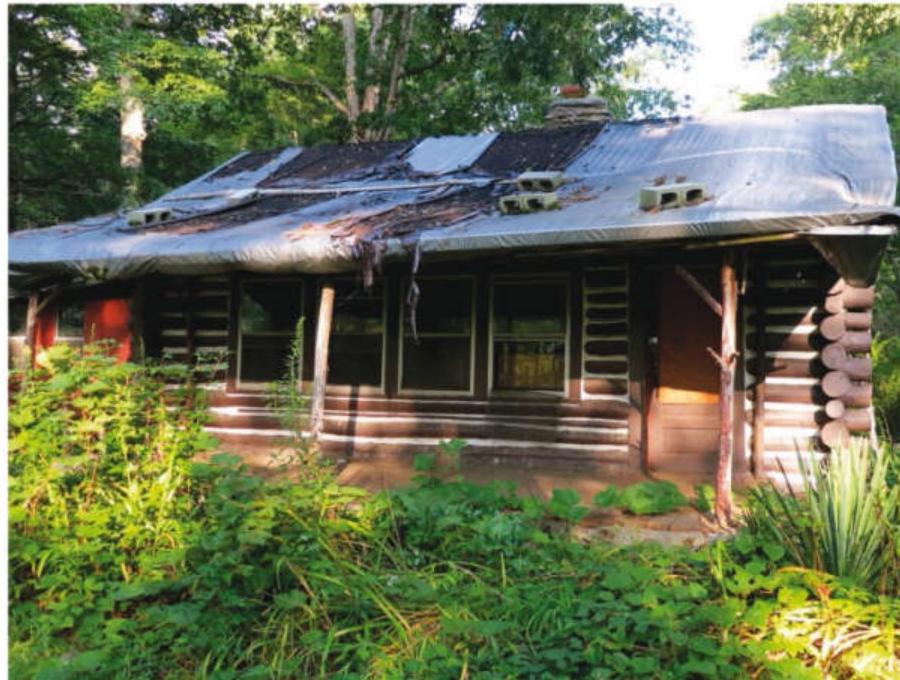
Much of Wolfe's autobiographical fiction is about a young man struggling to leave his hometown, a city clearly based on Asheville. Wolfe spent his twenties longing to get out of the mountains. I'd spent my twenties longing to get back in.

Thomas and I took a tour of the Thomas Wolfe House—the Old Kentucky Home—in downtown Asheville, and after the tour, I found Thomas standing in front of a photo of Wolfe taken during the summer of 1937 beside a cabin in nearby Oteen. At the cabin, he entertained a steady stream of celebrity hounds while writing a story entitled "The Party at Jack's," which would eventually be folded into *You Can't Go Home Again* when the novel was published after his death. The story was based on a real party Wolfe had attended years earlier in New York.

"Where was the cabin?" Thomas asked.

"I'm not sure," I said. "But I've heard it's still there."

Half an hour later, we were driving up and down Swannanoa River Road in Oteen. One of the volunteers at the Wolfe Memorial had given us a few landmarks for the cabin. "There's supposed to be some posts to drive between," he'd said. "It's up a dirt road, right near the recreation park."



THOMAS WOLFE'S WRITING CABIN OUTSIDE OF ASHEVILLE

Soon we were heading uphill on what seemed to be a long-forgotten gravel drive. The road opened to a clearing atop the ridge, and a small log cabin sat before us. We parked and stood in the hot afternoon sun, wondering if we were trespassing and, if so, what would happen to us if we were caught.

A plastic tarp covered the cabin's roof. Vines crept up the sides and tree limbs disappeared into the eaves. The front door was padlocked, and the bright sunlight made it impossible to see anything through the windows. When we walked around back, we stumbled upon a sign that had been yanked out of the ground and left behind: it read "Tom Wolfe's Cabin." Like the cabin, the sign appeared forgotten. It made me wonder if Wolfe's return to Asheville had been forgotten as well.

The Old Kentucky Home in downtown Asheville will always be remembered and celebrated not because Wolfe lived there,

but because he wrote about it and immortalized it. He never wrote about the Oteen cabin, and while he lived there he wrote about a party in New York City.

As Thomas and I climbed into the car and bumped back down the gravel road, I found myself wondering if Wolfe needed to leave New York to see that party clearly enough to fictionalize it. Similarly, I'd often wondered if he'd had to leave Asheville to create Altamont. It wasn't his current location that concerned Wolfe while he was writing; it was his memory of it that mattered.

Once I was back at my desk in Louisiana, I didn't have to step over a babbling stream to hear it. I didn't have to stand on a ridge to feel the breeze coming up from the valley below. I realized that I didn't have to be inside the Blue Ridge Mountains to write about them. They were already inside me, and that was good enough. *



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BLUE RIDGE BRIEFS

by JEDD FERRIS

DIRTY AIR IN NATIONAL PARKS

The skies in many parks are more polluted than those in cities, according to a study by the National Parks and Conservation Association. Air quality in 36 of 48 national parks have more unhealthy levels of ozone pollution than major cities. Regionally, Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky and Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee were named among the top 12 parks most harmed by air pollution. The greatest causes of pollution in parks are emissions from vehicle traffic and antiquated coal-fired power plants avoiding Clean Air Act restrictions through loopholes. According to the NPCA, without intervention, "in 50 years just 10 percent of national parks required to have clean air will actually have it."

BEAR ATTACK IN VIRGINIA

A woman received 28 stitches after being attacked by a bear in Virginia's Douthat State Park in August. Richmond's Laurie Cooksey was hiking with three of her children when the incident occurred. As the group descended on a trail from the Tuscarora Overlook, Cooksey noticed a bear behind a tree from 10 yards away. Before she could react, the bear charged, clawed Cookey's back, and bit her leg. Since the attack occurred on an incline, Cooksey was able to kick the bear and get to her family

members, who all fled in different directions. The group was then able to scare off the bear by making loud noises and attempting to appear as big as possible. After hiking four miles to the trailhead, Cooksey was rushed to LewisGale Hospital Allegheny. State officials ended up killing the wrong bear after the attack; DNA from Cooksey's clothes and wounds did not match the euthanized bear's DNA.

MONUMENTAL MOMENTUM

Nearly 200 West Virginia businesses have endorsed the proposal for Birthplace of Rivers National Monument. Not surprisingly,

they include companies that cater to outdoor enthusiasts. They also include companies that see the opportunity to highlight the best of West Virginia: the pristine headwaters that would be protected through the designation. Now the effort also has generated nationwide enthusiasm as part of the Live Monumental Tour, a cross-country traveling show to promote five national monument proposals. Birthplace of Rivers is the only one in the Appalachians. Learn more at wvrivers.org/ProtectingHeadwaters

Illustration by WADE MICKLEY

BEYOND THE BLUE RIDGE

70-YEAR-OLD BADWATER BADASS

In July, 70-year-old Bob Becker was the oldest finisher at the grueling Badwater Ultramarathon, a 135-mile slog starting at 282 feet below sea level in California's Death Valley and running up to 8,360 feet at Whitney Portal. Impressive, sure, but for Becker that wasn't enough. He then went on to become the oldest person ever to finish what's known as a Badwater Double, which involves climbing an additional 11 miles to Mount Whitney's 14,505-foot summit before turning around and running 146 miles back to Death Valley. The feat took Becker seven days, eight hours, and 48 minutes, which included rest time after completing the main 135-mile race in 41 hours, 30 minutes, and 21 seconds. Becker, who resides in Florida, told Runner's World the toughest part was the Whitney summit: "When you go from sea level, where I live and train, to 14,505 feet, that altitude knocks you out."

EMINEM BEAT ADDICTION WITH RUNNING

Platinum-selling rapper Eminem recently chatted with *Men's Journal* about his fitness regimen and revealed that after his 2007 pain killer overdose, running became a way to keep his mind off a post-rehab relapse. Eminem said at one point he was running 17 miles a day, all on a treadmill. He would run 8.5 miles in the morning before heading to a recording studio and then another 8.5 miles after work. "I got an addict's brain, and when it came to running, I think I got a little carried away," he said. The treadmill pounding eventually started to damage his hip flexors, so he started mixing up his routine with workouts like Insanity and P90X.



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MITCHELL TRIPLE CROWN

RUNNING, CYCLING, AND MOUNTAIN BIKING TO THE TOP OF THE EAST'S HIGHEST PEAK

by MELINA COOGAN

The inaugural Mount Mitchell Triple Crown was completed by its two creators and sole competitors, Mark Ledyard and Drew Shelfer.

Chances are you've never heard of the Triple Crown, but you may be familiar with its components: three endurance races that take place on the formidable 6,684-foot Mount Mitchell, the tallest mountain East of the Mississippi.

Each event is a staggering feat of athletic capability. The **Mount Mitchell Challenge** is a 40-mile ultra marathon from the town of Black Mountain to the summit of Mitchell and back down again in the dead of winter. The **Assault on Mount Mitchell**, a cycling race in the spring, climbs 103 miles to the summit via the relentlessly steep Blue Ridge Parkway. And then there's

the **Off-Road Assault on Mount Mitchell** (ORAMM), a 60-mile mountain bike race on forest roads and highly technical single track in mid-summer.

The Triple Crown challenges competitors to complete all three races in succession, thereby committing to a total of 203 grueling miles, 25,199 feet of climbing, and an unyielding onslaught of training, racing, and recovering between February and July.

Shelfer, 41, a social worker and father, initially conceived of the idea to tackle all three Mitchell races in one year, but it was Ledyard, a 49-year-old veterinarian, who pulled the trigger. "I said to Drew, you've been talking about this for three years now. I'm doing it. You can either join me, or you can keep talking about it."

Both Asheville men are experienced ultra-marathoners,

affable and filled with self-deprecating humor regarding their proclivity for the particular brand of suffering inherent to their pastime. Shelfer swears that his primary motivation to participate is "to be able to eat all the BBQ and drink all the beer I want." Yet they both possess the hallmark intensity of extreme athletes, that sense that a depthless reservoir of energy is just barely being restrained.

By early 2015, having recovered from a collection of injuries and orthopedic surgeries, Shelfer and Ledyard were finally ready to attempt the endurance trifecta.

The friendly but fierce rivalry that has always existed between the two athletes became their main source of motivation. Says Ledyard, "We have a history of competition. We've gotten hurt trying to beat each other."

In the end, Ledyard finished with

an accumulate time of 18 hours and 48 minutes, claiming first place by 1 hour and 9 minutes. They held a brief celebration by "borrowing" the podium after the ORAMM finishing ceremony, wielding homemade trophies and mugging for a single photo, taken by a friend.

"You want to know what was going through my head at that moment?" asks Ledyard. "Thank God it's over. This is one and done for me." But judging by the emulous glint in his eye, it seems unlikely that he'll let his title go undefended.

To the best of their knowledge, Ledyard and Shelfer are the first people to ever complete the three Mitchell races in one year. They hope their efforts may have inspired a few more challengers for future Triple Crowns—or, at the very least, a third-place finisher to round out the podium in 2016. ■



MT. MITCHELL TRIPLE CROWN FINISHING TIMES

MARK LEDYARD

MOUNT MITCHELL CHALLENGE: 5:35

ASSAULT ON MITCHELL: 6:31

OFF-ROAD ASSAULT: 6:42

"The absolute worst moment for me was the hour long slog up the Parkway on the Assault on Mount Mitchell. It took everything I had mentally to push through and not just sit on the side of the road for a while. Every race was hard, and long, and every one had times where I really had to reach deep to push myself to go, but none were as miserable as slogging up the Parkway. The best part for me was just taking on this challenge with Drew. He's one of the nicest guys, and it was fun training and hanging out with him." —Mark Ledyard

DREW SHELFER

MOUNT MITCHELL CHALLENGE: 5:48

ASSAULT ON MITCHELL: 7:08

OFF-ROAD ASSAULT: 7:01

"There were too many low moments to count. But every adventure was amazing, especially because I was chasing Mark the whole time. He made this challenge a ton of fun."—Drew Shelfer

RETURN OF THE NATIVES

BROOK TROUT SUCCESSFULLY TRANSPLANTED IN THE SMOKIES

by BEAU BEASLEY

Matt Kulp, a senior biologist for the National Park Service (NPS), stood alongside members of the Little River, Great Smoky Mountains, and Clinch Mountain chapters of Trout Unlimited as they donned wading gear, put on hats, and applied sunscreen. Surprisingly, they'd left their fishing gear at home. Nevertheless, the anglers hoped to land thousands of brook trout by assisting NPS employees in a field test of a stream in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP).

Kulp and his assistants were preparing to test the results of an effort to restore native brook trout to Lynn Camp Prong, a mid-sized trout stream in the GSMNP. At some point in the past, a well-meaning but ignorant individual transplanted a number of rainbow trout into the stream. The transplanted trout thrived and quickly began crowding out the native brook trout.

As early as 2005, Park officials began trying to uproot the rainbows. After electro-shocking the rainbows proved ineffective, NPS employees shocked brookies instead, moved them out of the stream and into adjacent streams within the park, and then released the fish-killing chemical antimycin into Lynn Camp Prong. Officials were convinced that such drastic action was the only way they could be certain that the invasive rainbow trout would not return.

By 2010, officials believed that all the rainbows had been extirpated from the stream. They then painstakingly moved nearly 1,000 native brookies from their temporary homes back to Lynn Camp Prong. Workers captured the fish and walked them in buckets outfitted with aeration pumps back to the stream. When all was said and done, the



brookies proved to be in even greater abundance than the rainbows found here earlier.

Lynn Camp Prong is ideal for brookies and a boon for trout anglers. "Many of our brook trout streams are at high elevations that are more susceptible to acid deposition, so this lower elevation segment will provide better buffering capacity against acid rain for years to come," says Kulp. The Lynn Camp project reconnects some tributaries, such as Marks Creek, Indian Flats Prong, and Panther Creek that now also have brook trout in them, and it will also supply fish downstream to Thunderhead Prong.

Reopening Lynn Camp Prong was a significant milestone. It marks the first time that every stream in the park was open to fishing and harvest since the park's inception in 1936. *



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TOO YOUNG?

MOST KIDS ARE PLAYING WITH LEGOS AND DOLLS. A FEW ARE THRU-HIKING LONG-DISTANCE TRAILS.

by JENNIFER PHARR DAVIS

As a backpacker and the mother of a two year old, I wonder if and how and when we will ever be able to hike long distances as a family. That question seems to be getting more attention with exceptionally younger thru-hikers tackling the trail.

In 2013, a five-year-old boy known by his trail name "Buddy Backpacker" hiked the entire Appalachian Trail with his parents and became the youngest recorded thru hiker on the 2,189-mile trail. In 2014, Buddy and his family

completed the 2,663-mile Pacific Crest Trail. That same year, Lisa Murray started the Appalachian Trail with her three-year-old twins, Tess and Cole. The twins spent their fourth birthday on the trail and managed to cover over 1,000 miles in 4 months. This year, Tess and Cole plan to finish their A.T. journey in mid-September.

Are these families providing a positive life-changing adventure for their children, or are they pushing the limits—and their offspring—a little too far?

Cindy Ross is a mother, author, and adventurer who made long distance trips with her kids. She trekked the 550-mile Colorado Trail with four llamas, a three-year-old daughter, and a one-year-old son. They turned that hike into the start of a Continental Divide Trail traverse and finished the 3,000-mile journey in five summers.

Yet Cindy does express concerns about young children undertaking long-distance hikes. "My kids had a choice to ride (a llama) or hike, and they never had to carry anything. They were completely in charge of the trip. We took breaks every hour and allowed as much time to play as to hike. Moderation is also really important. We were never out there more than eight weeks. I wouldn't have wanted to take my kids out there for six months at a time. I didn't want to push them."

There are, however, children who like to push themselves (and their parents), like Asher Molyneaux, who was seven years old when he approached his father and asked if they could hike the Appalachian Trail. He was eight years old when he completed the journey, with his father Paul devotedly hiking behind him. "It was his hike," Paul says. "Asher hiked in front to set the pace and determine our mileage. We were only out there as long as he wanted to be out there."

Most eight year olds are attending second grade, but Asher and many of the children hiking the trail are homeschooled by their parents—and the trail. "I remember people asking me about his education, and I always thought it was such a strange question," said Paul. "He was getting the best education possible from the trail and the people on it."

Looking back now at age 13, Asher says, "I was learning so much on the trail and from the people I met on the trail. We ended up hiking with a naturalist, a drag racer, and an astronomer. I learned a lot of things that not everybody else got to learn."

When asked about the risk of hiking with young children, Paul

points out that it's more dangerous to put your kid in a car seat than to take them hiking on the Appalachian Trail. "I wasn't nervous," Asher adds. "The fear of the woods wasn't instilled in me." Now Asher wants to do the trail again but says he will probably wait until he's sixteen.

Still, most parents, myself included, have hesitations about taking their young children on long-distance backpacking trips for physiological and psychological reasons. Consulting with a doctor and talking through these concerns will help families feel better prepared on the trail.

Mother, backpacker, and pediatrician Tracy Macpherson does not believe that an extended trip would adversely harm a child developmentally. "The human body is amazing," she says. "It is fully equipped to respond and adapt to the stresses imposed. I suspect this is even more true with children. With the proper training, anyone—including children—will become more physiologically ready for an extended backpacking trip." Any ill effects would only arise from poor preparation or pushing children beyond their ability.

The common theme among parents who hike successfully with young children is this: it is not the parent's hike—it is the child's journey. When there is no emotional attachment to success or a finish line, there is also no age limit on adventure and self-discovery.

There will most likely always be concern and backlash against children hiking long-distance, but perhaps that is because we live in a culture where most children are not spending much time outdoors. I have met young long-distance hikers like Asher Molyneaux and Buddy Backpacker, and when I talk to them about the trail, they typically smile, laugh, and light up with excitement. That seems like a good indicator that these kids are capable and old enough to hike the trail. Because as Cindy Ross puts it, "It's impossible to make a small child fake being happy." *



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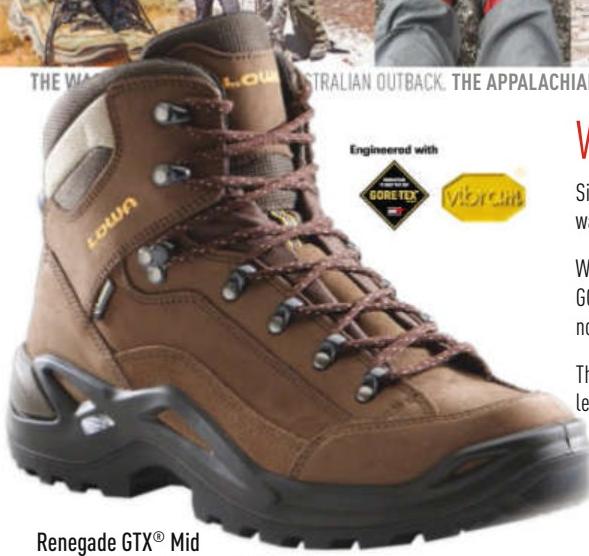
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Fearless

FALL FOLIAGE

5 MOST ADVENTUROUS HIKES
FOR LEAF-PEEPERS



by STUART PECK

My brother and I had a simple out-and-back planned in a remote section of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

We would hike up to one of the shelters scattered along the Appalachian Trail. After spending the night we'd head back down the mountain. The itinerary seemed simple enough, so when the rain started falling, we didn't think anything of the light pitter-patter on my cheap big-box-store tent. However, we quickly learned a lack of preparation almost lead to our demise. After spending a cold, wet night in the shelter we started down a steep trail that was eroding beneath our feet as we hiked on the saturated ground. We both sighed deeply when we stumbled into the campground at the terminus of our trail. It wasn't until seeing the car that we knew things would be okay.

Any trail can be dangerous, without the proper respect for nature, preparation, or knowledge of navigating through the east's rhododendron thick forests. Just ask 'Hike More Adventures' guide, Curt Teague. He started this western North Carolina service in 2014 with a buddy after they had been guiding family and

friends into remote parts of the Pisgah National Forest and Linville Gorge since 2001.

"Some of the danger factors in the Linville Gorge are always the obvious ones that someone might encounter in any backcountry situation," he said. "Snake and bear encounters, poorly marked or overgrown trails."

This leaf-peeping season, we challenge you to earn your colors by tackling one of the five toughest trails in Appalachia. All of these trails are strenuous slogs, but you'll be rewarded with some of the most spectacular fall scenery in the South.

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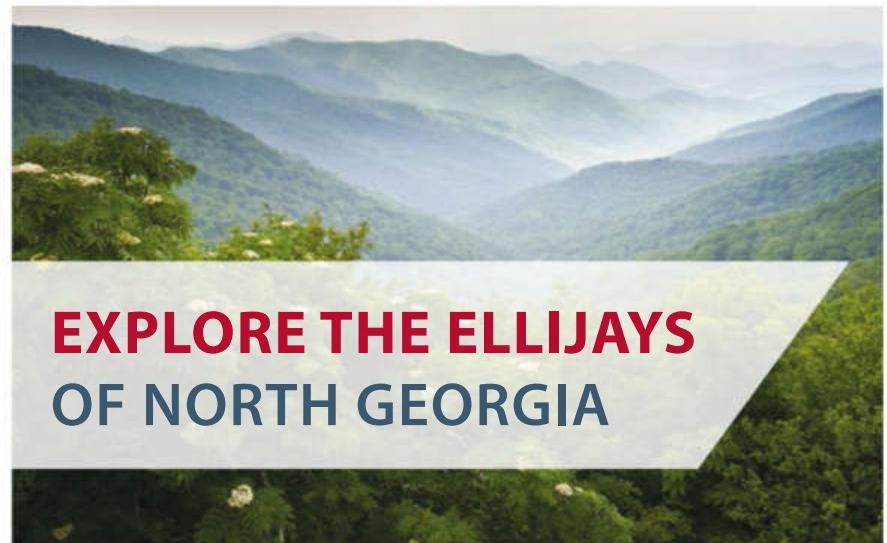
Leave the hordes of tourists searching the asphalt pull-offs for black bears and hike to this remote backcountry trail near Cades Cove. Part of what makes the Eagle

THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY NEAR BOONE OVERLOOKS SOME OF THE MOST DRAMATIC—AND DANGEROUS—HIKING ADVENTURES.

photo by TOMMY PENICK



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Creek trail so extreme is its lack of easy accessibility. The trailhead can only be reached by hiking from the Appalachian Trail (via the Bote Mountain trail) or the Benton Mackaye Trail. Your other option is boating across Fontana Lake (leave from the Fontana Marina). This nine mile out-and-back is prime black bear country. This summer, a black bear attacked a hiker and his son on the adjacent Jenkins Ridge Trail, forcing the closure of several backcountry campsites and neighboring trails. If the remoteness and wildlife aren't enough to spike your adrenaline levels, then maybe the Eagle Creek will. The trail has 15 creek crossings, often requiring master fording skills. You won't find tube-sock-sporting day hikers on this trail, and you can forget about bridges. You're on your own. After heavy rains and in early spring, some of these crossings can prove even more challenging, with knee- or even waist-deep wading required.

MOUNT MITCHELL TRAIL

PISGAH NATIONAL FOREST

NORTH CAROLINA

5.6 MILES (*one way*)

Climbing the highest peak east of the Mississippi should be on everyone's bucket list. For the serious hiker, this trail doesn't disappoint. Nearly six miles of monster switchbacks and rocky footing place this trail firmly in the strenuous category. What makes this hike even more challenging is not what's beneath your feet but above your head. Weather is unpredictable at the top of the Black Mountains. Sudden rain, lightning, or snow storms pop up quickly. If not prepared, hikers have been known to get stuck in storms, and hypothermia can be a real concern. In winter, snow storms dumping large amounts of powder and ice that leave trails impassible. Even the most seasoned peak bagger can find themselves stranded.

ROCK JOCK / PINCH-IN TRAILS

LINVILLE GORGE WILDERNESS

NORTH CAROLINA

4.5 / 1.5 MILES (*one way*)

The Linville Gorge has earned the reputation as the most rugged landscape in the East. Many hikers have lost their way in the gorge wilderness, and a hiker had suffered a heart attack while attempting to climb the Pinch In Trail. Another hiker broke his foot at the bottom of the gorge and had to crawl out.

The Linville Gorge's real danger comes in its Rocky Mountain style ruggedness. Trails don't follow switchbacks or the line of least resistance. Instead they charge right up the cliffs. The Pinch-In Trail measures just 1.5 miles from its intersection with the Linville River Trail to the top of the ridge 1,700 feet above. In addition to the grueling climb, a wildfire has decimated the forest, leaving you fully exposed to

the unforgiving sun as you climb. Nearby, the Rock Jock trail flanks the steep, craggy side of the gorge, following a fairly consistent elevation. However, what this trail lacks in difficult climbs it makes up in way finding. No blazes mark the trail, and overgrown sections with numerous side trails make it easy for someone to get truly and seriously lost.

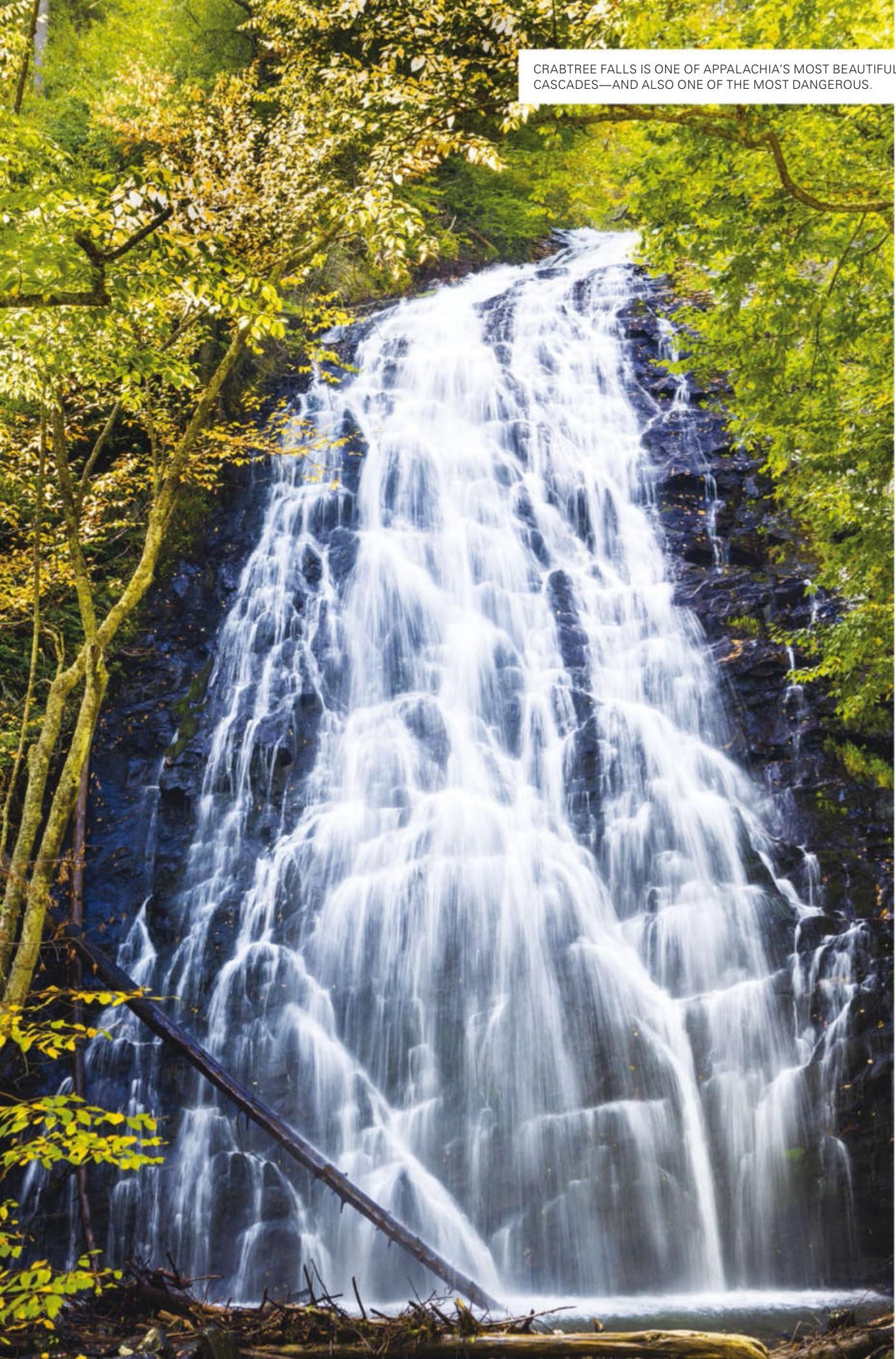
INDIAN STAIRCASE

DANIEL BOONE NATIONAL FOREST

KENTUCKY

1.5 MILES (*loop*)

In the Red River Gorge, walking too heavy footed through the trees could mean falling head first off a 100-foot sandstone cliff. Every year hikers fall to their deaths as they lose their footing on a cliffside trail and end up at the bottom of a ravine. While most trails within this national forest are out of harm's way, one section of trail in particular has intrigued hikers and led to an



CRABTREE FALLS IS ONE OF APPALACHIA'S MOST BEAUTIFUL CASCADES—AND ALSO ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS.

unofficial footpath in the woods. Known as the Indian Staircase, this three-quarter-mile detour off the long, winding Sheltowee Trace trail leads to a horseshoe-shaped rock whose top looks unaccessible at first glance. However, after closer examination, a smooth, slabby monolith turns into a staircase to the sky. While this may seem intimidating, it can be tackled, even with heavy packs. Look for the divots in the rock (that's where the Indian Staircase got its name) and climb with four points of contact to gain the top of the rock wall. The exposure and bushwhacking turn this challenging hike into a dangerous scramble.

CRABTREE FALLS

GEORGE WASHINGTON NATIONAL FOREST

VIRGINIA

4 MILES (*one way*)

While this trail may not seem like a challenge (the first observation platform is less than a mile from the parking lot), the tallest cascading waterfall east of the Mississippi has a lure that kills. Go off-trail, scrambling across the waterfall, and you could slip, falling hundreds of feet to a watery grave. Waterfalls are among some of the biggest killers of hikers visiting the backcountry in the east, and Crabtree has been an especially harrowing place for hikers.

The seemingly easy trail up to the falls, for many seasoned hikers, can lead to overconfidence which grimly can lead to one misstep. Even more dangerous is the accessibility that leads inexperienced hikers to try their luck on the slick rocks. In recent years there have been numerous fatalities and injuries recorded at Crabtree Falls, including two deaths in 2015 alone, the most recent coming in late August. In June, a hiker fell 80 feet after taking just a few steps off the trail to get a closer look and a better picture of the cascades. *

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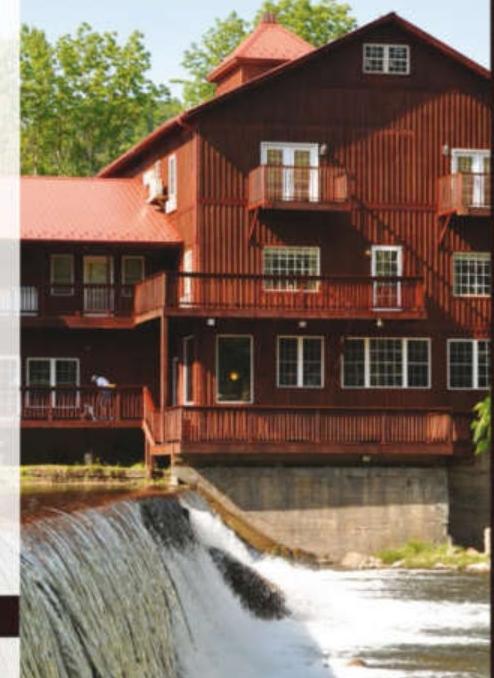
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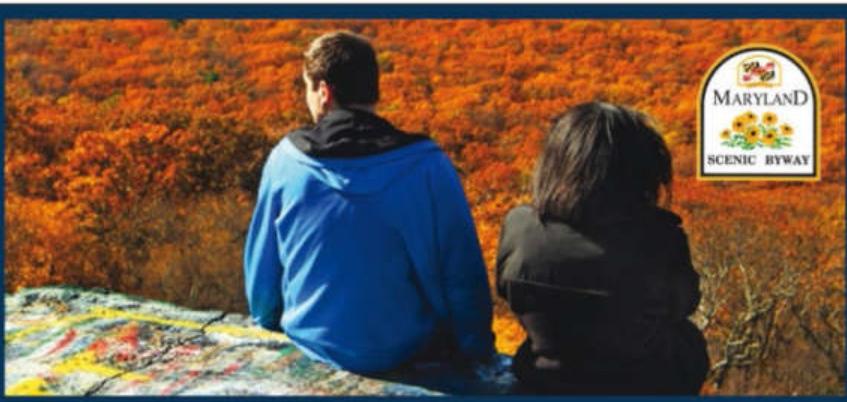
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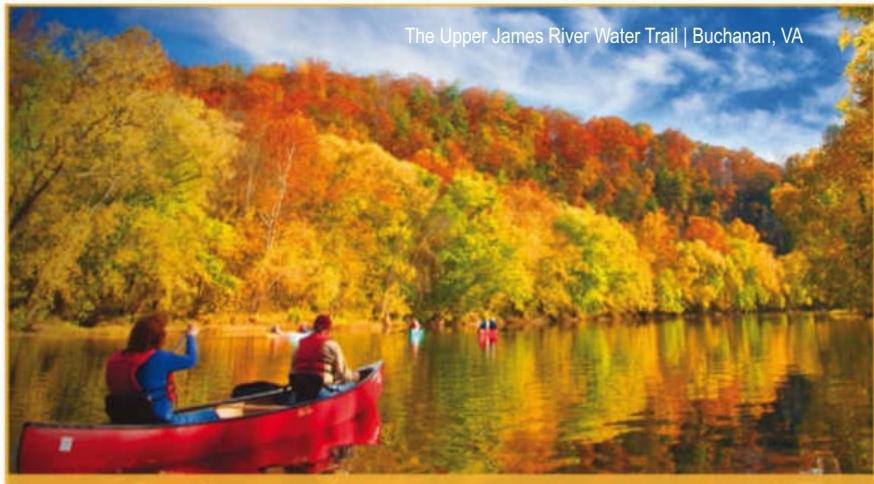


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SIX PIONEERING FEMALES WHO HAVE
ROCKED THE REGIONAL OUTDOOR SCENE

by JESS DADDIO

MKAT FIELDS SOARS OVER GORILLA ON
THE GREEN RIVER NARROWS.

photo by CHAD BLOTNER

I learned to kayak from men, paddled with men, received a rope-bag-to-the-face from men. It's a fact: men dominate the world of whitewater. While that's not necessarily a bad thing, ultimately, most accomplished female athletes in any adventure sport tend to get overlooked. Meet four adventure pioneers, and two up-and-coming forces, who push the limits and kick ass, all with the grace of a woman.



photo by ANNA WAGNER



photo by CHRIS NOBLE

THE PADDLER

ANNA LEVESQUE, 41

FOUNDER, GIRLS AT PLAY
Asheville, N.C.

STARTED PADDLING: while working in the kitchen of a rafting company in Quebec.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE: competing as a member of the Canadian Freestyle Team for five years, receiving bronze at the 2001 World Championships in Spain and several top three finishes between 1999 and 2004, and founding Girls At Play (GAP) in 2004, which offers whitewater kayak, SUP, and yoga educational programs for women.

Why kayaking?

I fell in love with just how people that were really into kayaking and raft guiding were following their passions. That was very different for me compared to the household I grew up in which was very conventional—you go to college, get a job, you make money. I was on track to go to law school but when I started kayaking my life took a 180-degree turn. I never looked back.

What challenges did you face in height of your competitive paddling career?

At the time I started paddling at the pro circuit, there was definitely some harshness. There was a competition almost every weekend at that time

and I was paddling a lot of hard stuff. I really became aware of my fear and doubt and lack of confidence, and noticed how that was exacerbated when I was paddling with all men. They approached the river differently. I was told you gotta watch what we do and just learn that way. There wasn't a whole lot of feedback and if there was it wasn't kind.

Did you ever feel like giving up?

It didn't deter me. I kept competing, and had some really good success in the competition world, but still felt that lack of confidence. The more I spoke with my female colleagues and paddlers...they had very similar feelings and experiences.

How have you found that men and women are different?

We all have the fight or flight response, but women also tend and befriend—the important part is the befriend part. A female's desire to affiliate with other women in stressful situations is one of the biggest differences between the genders, where men tend to be more comfortable standing on their own in stressful situations.

Though your focus with GAP is primarily on women in whitewater, do you have any advice for female athletes in general who may feel hindered by doubt or fear?

If the fear weren't present, then there would be no growth. Instead of

getting overtaken by fear or letting yourself downward spiral into doubt, just accept that that's there and you have the chance to act anyway. That's the gem—being courageous is feeling fear and accepting fear but acting anyways in a responsible manner.

What are the first three words that come to mind when you hear the words "like a woman?"

Powerful, integrity, compassion—these words are colored by the women that I surround myself with.

THE CLIMBER

ELAINA ARENZ, 41

OWNER, NEW RIVER MOUNTAIN GUIDES
Fayetteville, W.Va.

STARTED CLIMBING: while attending the University of Texas at Austin

ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE: establishing Mexico's El Potrero Chico as a world-class climbing destination, setting numerous first female ascents across the United States and Mexico, becoming a co-owner of Chicks Climbing & Skiing in 2015, and serving on the Board of Directors for the Access Fund.

What was your first experience climbing?

I went to the gym and I loved it. The next week we went outside. I top-rope and led my first climb on the same day and in retrospect, it was

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probably not the best way to learn, but I was on the fast track from day one. Climbing was something that I connected with instantly.

How did your relationship with climbing grow from that first day?

It became all-consuming. It's a bit of an addiction. Climbing is not just something you do for fun—it's a lifestyle that you follow. For me, I went from partying-college-girl to somebody who was focused on taking care of mind, body, and soul through climbing.

What was the climbing scene like then? Were there any women?

Twenty-one years ago, I could count all of the female climbers on one hand. I mostly climbed with men. It was a bit of a tough love situation. [My coworker who taught me] is my long lost brother from another mother. He knew my strengths and knew what I was capable of doing. He was able to challenge me in ways that allowed me to grow as a climber.

There's the saying anything in life worth having is worth working for.



photo by ERIC CHANCE



What climb comes to mind with those words?

Apollo Reed at Summersville. It was the first and only 13 I've ever done. It's always been a benchmark climb. I've watched my friends casually run laps on this thing and it took me a year of projecting this thing just to get halfway, then another three months to get past that, then another three months to get it all together. In the beginning it felt impossible, like I'd never be able to link up all the moves.

How do you cope with the stress of leading difficult routes for the first time?

Breathing. Using your eyes. Just do one move at a time and be objective. You won't know unless you try.

include persuading the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection to issue stronger rules for coal processing plants, helping to uncover years of false Clean Water Act reporting by several coal companies in Kentucky, and securing drinking water for several West Virginia families whose wells had been contaminated by mountaintop mining.

What made you get into environmental policy work?

I studied biology and philosophy in college and worked in a laboratory doing physiology research. I decided when I was doing that that it was really cool and interesting, but the things I was doing you couldn't really see applying to human medicine in 50 years or even my lifetime. I got recommended to study elephant seals in Argentina and that was the start of things really changing for me.

How has your love of kayaking influenced your environmental pursuits?

Through kayaking I'd become sorta aware about mountaintop mining, but once I was at Yale I ended up getting really interested in mountaintop removal after attending a speaker series.

Has your passion for whitewater altered your appreciation of the outdoors in any way?

I've always had a strong appreciation

for the outdoors and kayaking has certainly reinforced that, but it's also provided that extra motivation to keep traveling and arrange my life so that it's not dominated by any one thing, namely work. I really enjoy my job, but I have to be really aware of finding that balance. It's something that constantly needs to readjust.

What's the reality of Appalachia's current environmental status?

The coal industry is really changing. Natural gas surpassed coal for the first time ever in July this year. It dropped from half of our energy source to a little over a third. Central Appalachia is very much in a time of transition right now, and it's going to be somewhat of a painful transition. Every single mine is not going to shut down tomorrow, but there are going to be reclamation issues for decades to come.

Are there any takeaways you have learned on the river that translate into your work?

Both my job and kayaking have taught me to recognize small accomplishments and realize that you can put a lot of those small things together into something bigger. You might not win your race or end mountaintop removal, but all of the little things you put together over the years, if you look back on them and bother giving yourself credit, you realize you've accomplished more than you thought you did.

THE CAMERAWOMAN

COLLEEN LAFFEY, 54

CAMERA OPERATOR, FREELANCE
Fayetteville, W.Va.

STARTED SHOOTING: during school at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh

ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE: shooting for a number of reality television shows on major networks like NBC, CBS, Discovery Channel, and National Geographic Channel. Shows include, but are not limited to, The Jersey Shore, Deadliest Catch, the Adventure Racing World Championships, and Red Bull Divide and Conquer.

How did your camera career begin?

In 1981 I shot photos on the New, Gauley, Cheat, and Yough Rivers for Wild Rivers Photo Service based in Uniontown, Penn. I started doing some video boating in 1988.

What was video boating like in the late '80s?

It was a whole different world—number one, not every rafting company did video and there were just a handful of people who [video boated] at the time.

Aside from being one of the only female video boaters, what were some of the other challenges you encountered?

As a video kayaker you were pretty

THE ENVIRONMENTALIST

ERIN SAVAGE, 31

SENIOR CENTRAL APPALACHIAN CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR, APPALACHIAN VOICES

Asheville, N.C.

STARTED PADDLING: during a research trip to Uganda.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE: placing in the top three at a number of the region's premier whitewater races, including the Cheoah Race, Great Falls Race, the Top Yough and Upper Yough Races, and the multisport Silverback Race of the Green River Games. Environmental accomplishments

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JUNE-SEPTEMBER 2016
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PADDLING SERIES
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watergirlsatplay.com

TBD 2016
GREEN RIVER TAKEOVER
N.C.
TBD.com

MAY 2016
NEW RIVER GORGE CRUSH:
WOMEN'S CLIMBING WEEKEND
W.Va.
americanpineclub.org

JUNE 2016
LADIES' MTB SKILLS CLINIC
WITH SUE HAYWOOD
W.Va.
canaanmtbfestival.blogspot.com

much on your own. I had this little motto—alert, aware, alive—because just being that alone, a lot of times at really high water, climbing around on slippery rocks, it's a dangerous job.

The first year I videoed I was not a good kayaker, so I really was danger ranger out there. Looking back, I would not have recommended it to myself. When I ski patrolled, I didn't ski that well [either] but when you're forced to go out there and do it every single day it makes you stronger and it makes you better.

Did you ever feel added pressure because you were a woman in a male-dominated industry?

I've worked with dudes my whole life in male-dominated jobs and there's a part of me that kinda forgets the judgment and that I'm "not supposed to be" as fit as them because I'm a girl. At my core, I know I'm good and if I'm not, I'm going to get there. But when I first started raft guiding on the Upper Gauley and I'd be the

only woman on the trip, it was like, you can't make a mistake because if you make a mistake, all women make mistakes.

When did you decide to switch from video boating to shooting television shows?

I video boated full-time for 11 years. When I first started video boating, it was such a challenge and such a thrill and I never knew if I was going to be alive at the end of the day. Towards the end of it, having to shoot the same stuff day in and day out, my brain was about to explode. Every time a TV crew came in [to shoot rafting], I would be so envious. I'd think, "I can do it, I can do it better," and after a certain point it was like, "Well go f*cking do it!"

What was that transition like? Did you find work easily?

It was a struggle to start. No one was like, here Colleen, I'm going to make you a full-fledged camera operator. I

didn't have a fairy godmother.

What do you love about your job?
I'm on the road about six months a year. I love the airports, love hotel rooms, love travelling. Getting paid to see new places is really the best.

RISING STANDOUTS

These girls are coming in hot. Meet MKat and Lindsey, two ladies who are bringing the heat in today's whitewater and mountain biking scenes.

MARY KATHERINE "MKAT" FIELDS

CALLS HOME: Chattanooga, Tenn.

STOKED FOR: 22 years

PICKED UP PADDLING: after quitting competitive swimming

CLAIM TO FAME: First female descent of Desoto Falls (75 feet); 3rd place in Green River Race

PADDLES: an old LiquidLogic Stomper

DREAM BOAT: LiquidLogic Flying Squirrel or a Stinger

The Peaceful Side of the Smokies in Townsend, Tennessee, gives you access to all the fun adventures and relaxation you could hope for in America's favorite national park. Cades Cove, waterfalls, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, hiking, motorcycling, kayaking, historical tours and so much more await you. We'll even plan your stay.

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photo by CHAD BLOTNER

FAVORITE RAPID: Gorilla. It's a love-hate relationship.

PADDLING HEROES: Hunt Jennings, Katie Dean, Erin Savage.

PRE-PADDLE JAMS: Guns N' Roses.

Appetite for Destruction.

POST-PADDLE FUEL: Barbeque

LITTLE KNOWN FACT: I have an unhealthy habit of watching too much Netflix.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE COCKPIT: Just be yourself. Don't try to outdo anyone. There are a lot more people pushing

themselves harder than they're ready. As a female, don't think you have to push the sport more than you need to.

LINDSEY CARPENTER

CALLS HOME: Harrisonburg, Va.

STOKED FOR: 20 years

BEEN BIKING: since birth

CLAIM TO FAME: Finished the Shenandoah Mountain 100 in 10.5 hours at age 19, top three finishes at the Michaux Endurance Series,



photo by TOM MCMILLAR

winning the 2015 Massanutton Enduro and Pro XC.

RIDES: Trek Superfly 9.8, 29er, hardtail.

DREAM BIKE: Santa Cruz SOLO, black and blue

FAVORITE RIDE: Out the door from Harrisonburg to Massanutton, around the trails, and back to town.

BIKING HEROES: Sue Haywood and Dad.

PRE-RIDE JAMS: Britney Spears Pandora kinda does it for me.

MID-RIDE FUEL: Boiled potatoes.

Sometimes steak or bacon. I have a lot of allergies and intolerances—dairy, nuts, gluten, soy, shellfish. And those are just a couple of examples.

LITTLE KNOWN FACT: I also bird and deer hunt. And I have a sugar addiction, mainly for Starburst. The pink ones. Always.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE SADDLE: You're gonna get dropped and you're gonna be the last person that everyone waits on and you're gonna cry and throw your bike but that's just the initial threshold for fitness and skill. It's just a matter of putting the time in. *

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A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a black tank top and grey shorts, climbing a large, light-colored rock face. She is looking up and to her right, with her arms extended and hands gripping the rock. Her feet are also firmly planted on the surface. The background shows dense green foliage and trees. Overlaid on the left side of the image is a large, bold text message.

**THE
SECRET
IS OUT**



BOULDERING IN THE HIGH COUNTRY IS NO LONGER LOCALS ONLY.

by JESS DADDIO

The history of bouldering in Boone is fraught with access issues, bulldozers, and controversy. Where did it all begin, and what does the future hold for a sport that, in the beginning, was never considered a sport at all?

In the beginning there were ropes and shoes, makeshift harnesses and gear. Rock climbing in even its earliest form was much like what you and I think of it today, except without the mainstream “cool” factor, about a fifth of the participants, and double the gumption.

But if traditional rock climbing was considered “anti-establishment” then, during the ‘60s and ‘70s when big wall first ascents barely attracted national notice, the sport of bouldering was like a redheaded stepchild, the wannabe of climbing counterculture.

In fact, few considered it a sport at all. Up until the age of, and even decades after, John Gill, who is largely considered the first true American boulderer, bouldering was simply a means to an end, a way for French mountaineers to train in the off-season for alpine climbs. It was the earliest version of a hangboard you could find.

For John Gill, though, who came from a background of gymnastics, bouldering afforded climbers not

only the chance to grow stronger, but to also improve technique and test acrobatic-like dynamic movements.

In the mid-‘50s, Gill decided to completely ditch the rope and embrace bouldering for good. He spent most of the next decade bouldering in places like Georgia’s Stone Mountain as well as Alabama’s Shades Mountain and DeSoto State Park while working toward a master’s degree in mathematics at the University of Alabama. Though he would go on to discover and send 19 boulders across the continental United States, the seeds Gill planted in the South took root and over the next 30 years, helped move the sport from the fringes of climbing to center stage.

Jim Horton of Boone, N.C., was one of those climbers inspired by the path that John Gill paved. It took only two outings for Horton to realize, “bouldering was for me.” And by bouldering, that sometimes meant not climbing at all but hiking, biking, scouting boulders from ridgelines and

then bushwhacking for hours through overgrown rhododendron to get there. “Most of the time, it was a wild goose chase,” Horton remembers. “Even if you found a rock it might have a landing that was too severe or a route that wasn’t short enough.”

But that was hardly discouraging. Boone was ripe with metasandstone rock formations just waiting to be found, a treasure hunt through a sub-alpine forest fairly tale. Horton and local climbing legends such as Joey Henson, Eddie Blackledge, and Mike Grimm spent long hours scouring the woods of Boone in search of rock, landing their focus mainly on boulders off of US-221, Grandfather Mountain, and Howard’s Knob.

Horton’s own handiwork as a trail builder and problem developer can be seen all over Hound Ears, a gated community to the south of Boone that guards some of the best bouldering in town—yes, guards, as in fence, security watch, surveillance cameras. The boulders at Hound Ears are technically off-limits to climbers but, thanks to the efforts of Horton, the Hound Ears Club opens up their grounds to the dirtbag masses for just one day a year to kick off the Triple Crown Bouldering Series. Since Horton first organized the Hound Ears bouldering competition 22 years ago, he’s managed to maintain that once-a-year access for all but one year and says the sport of bouldering has exploded since those days of bushwhacking with his cronies.

“During that time I’ve seen younger and younger people show up to the competitions,” Horton says. “The women’s category is much larger than it used to be, with both sexes

THE BETA

WHERE TO CLIMB: Though Boone doesn't claim to have a printed guidebook, there is plenty of information online at booneboulders.com to get you started. Your best bet is to drop the ego, be friendly, and ask around. This is the South after all. Hospitality is real.

WHEN TO GO: The best part about climbing in Boone is that you can go year-round. Spring and summer tend to be rainy or humid (or both), so aim for visiting in the fall when cool temps and stunning foliage are enough to make the drive worthwhile. Boone does get a fair amount of snow in the winter, but there are plenty of exposed, sunny, south-facing boulders to warm you up.

HOW TO GET THERE: Nestled in the upper northwestern corner of North Carolina, Boone is situated at the intersection of US 421 and 321. From Asheville, it's just under two hours away.

WHERE TO SLEEP: \$0: Pitch a tent at **Grandfather Mountain State Park** (ncparks.gov) \$25-\$85: Pick a primitive site or rent a four-bedroom cabin at **Honey Bear Campground** (honeybearcampground.com)

\$149-\$209: Curl up by a fire in the historic **Lovill House Inn Bed & Breakfast** (lovillhouseinn.com)

WHAT TO BRING:

Climbing shoes. Chalk bag. Crash pad. Those three items are standard fare for any bouldering session. But if you're going to visit the High Country, why not go local and support one of the country's leading climbing gear manufacturers, conveniently located right up the road in Banner Elk, N.C.—**Misty Mountain Threadworks** (mistymountain.com).

NO. 1 HIGHLANDER BOULDER PAD
Measuring three feet by four feet, this portable crash pad folds taco style and comes complete with padded shoulder straps and a waist belt so you can focus less on carrying gear and more on hacking your way through rhododendron. Did I mention it comes in camo? **\$249.95;** mistymountain.com

NO. 2 FASHION CHALK BAG
Soft knit lined, drawstring closed, and stealth pockets galore! This bag has plenty of room for not just your chalk but your brushes, too. Pick your favorite Misty Mountain fabric and they'll sew you up a custom chalk bag designed specifically for you. **\$24.95;** mistymountain.com

going more toward 50/50."

The reason for this upsurge in popularity? None other than the climbing gym movement.

In the early '90s, when Horton was just a college kid at Appalachian State (and the local bouldering spot, Howard's Knob, was still open to climbing), artificial climbing walls were hardly commonplace, let alone 13,000-square-foot facilities designed specifically for bouldering. Now, according to Climbing Business Journal, there are 436 climbing gyms across the country and over 200 bouldering competitions per year.

"Colleges, and even high schools, have climbing teams and climbing walls," Horton adds. "It's really taken off."

Climbers in Boone, though, haven't exactly felt the effects of bouldering's upswing. Maybe it's the predictably wet climate that keeps visitors at bay (56 inches of rain per year), or perhaps it's that bouldering areas in Boone aren't concentrated in one specific area—a 30-mile corridor of sporadic boulders parallels the Blue Ridge Parkway and US-221, keeping even weekend fall crowds relatively spread out.

But mostly, you can blame, or thank, the High Country's unstable history of climbing access for the relative solitude of Boone bouldering. During the mid-to-late-90s, as



climbers unveiled boulders on the outskirts of Boone, developers were just as quick to snatch those areas up, kick climbers out, and occasionally, bulldoze the boulders altogether.

"No one is going to compete with developers," says Paul Fuelling, a Boone boulderer and local wood worker. "They're millionaire billionaires. All we can do is suck it up and move on."

Fuelling moved to the High Country 15 years ago. By that time, some of Boone's earliest bouldering gems had already been discovered and then taken away, either at the hands of developers or environmentalists protecting rare plant life in the High Country. Though most of the present-day boulder fields were already well established, that didn't stop Fuelling, his wife Kim, and friend Pat Goodman from pushing the envelope on highball boulder problems and exploring Pisgah National Forest for more rock.

"You gotta earn it," Fuelling says of bouldering in the High Country. "It's not just handed to you in a \$12 guidebook. You gotta come here and poke around and talk to people and make friends."

His comment about the guidebook? It's not just a metaphor. Boone has never had a guidebook on bouldering, nor, it seems, will it ever. That fact alone has fueled a reputation of Boone among climbers as being a "locals only" community, one that shuns newcomers and hoards the area's secret rock.

Of course, that distinction couldn't be farther from the truth.

"It's just not something that needs to be advertised to every gym climber in the U.S.," Fuelling says, citing the new-age climbers' lack of environmental ethics as a threat to Boone's delicate access. "It's like, yeah, you're allowed to be climbing at Grandmother, but you have to realize that [the Forest Service] goes up there every year and looks at the trails and decides whether or not they are going to continue to let us do that."

"It's kinda hard to release a guidebook to climbing places you

might not have access to a year later," Horton adds.

What's more, state park officials and private landowners who aren't familiar with climbing know only what the media portrays of the sport, which, in recent years, has involved extreme examples such as Alex Honnold's free-solo ascents of big wall climbs like El Capitan and Half Dome.

"A lot of times, we're fighting that negative image [that the sport is dangerous] or that glorified image of climbing, to secure our access," Horton says.

Almost ironically, the climbers who are crowding the crags but also helping to change that glorified image are of a younger generation, one that grew up with commodities like the Internet, cell phones, and, of course, climbing gyms.

"I didn't even know bouldering was a thing until I walked in my first indoor climbing gym in North Carolina and figured out there was a whole community around it," says Adkins, Va., native Aaron Parlier.

At 29 years old, Parlier has already made his mark on bouldering in the Southeast, specifically in his home state of Virginia. In 2013, Parlier published the first bouldering guidebook to Grayson Highlands State Park, an area mostly known for its feral miniature pony herds, sweeping vistas, and wild blueberry season. While serving for AmeriCorps at Grayson Highlands, Parlier utilized his schooling interests in land management to help the park not only develop the bouldering but also conceptualize and implement a climbing impact management plan.

"There wasn't a lot of information at all on climbing in southwest Virginia," says Parlier, who climbed while attending Virginia Tech. "I knew in the back of my mind that there were really nice sandstone areas and boulders in Grayson Highlands, but that exploration happened by default. There was no one talking



BOULDER AREAS IN GRAYSON HIGHLANDS LIKE THE BOY SCOUT TOP ROPE WALL WERE ESTABLISHED BY BOONE CLIMBERS IN THE '90S BUT HAVE ONLY RECENTLY MADE APPEARANCES IN ANY FORMAL GUIDEBOOK

about it, no knowledge of it. Whether or not you were wanting to climb on new rocks, you were going to be."

Of course, Grayson Highlands had seen climbers before, whether or not the rangers there knew of it. Horton, in fact, put up many of the original problems in the park, but in the pre-Internet, access-sensitive age of climbing, there wasn't much in the way of documentation.

"When I saw the park rangers come, I ducked further into the woods," Fuelling remembers of early trips to Grayson. "Now I don't have to."

Parlier, who just finished graduate school at Appalachian State University in Boone, says that, while North Carolina climbers have been climbing at Grayson Highlands for decades, there was always a bit of trepidation when it came to developing the area to the point of public promotion.

"A lot of climbers assumed the climbing in Grayson would instantaneously be banned because that happened to a lot of places here in Boone," he says. "Right over the North Carolina border, a lot of state parks are really apprehensive [to climbing] whereas southwest Virginia is really open to it and proactive. [Grayson's bouldering scene] has also set the stage for other communities in southwest Virginia like Norton and Wise County to get on board."

The Grayson Highlands Bouldering Guide includes 300 choice boulder problems, but according to Parlier, there are now over 1,000 problems across the park. He says plans are already in the works for a second volume. On any given weekend, the park's four rental crash pads are rarely in the visitor's center, spare chalk is out of stock, and the parking lots are full.

The success of Grayson hasn't gone

unnoticed. In fact, even Boone's gated communities and clubs are starting to see the benefits of supporting outdoor recreation activities like hiking, biking, and even climbing.

"Golf clubs are losing some popularity and outdoor activities are being seen as an amenity that a lot of these clubs are wanting to add to the list of offerings," Horton says.

Though the local climbing community has tried, and failed, numerous times to outright purchase and protect Hound Ears bouldering in perpetuity, Horton doesn't think the acquisition is impossible. And with environmentally conscious, respectable young climbers like Parlier filtering through the university every few years, Horton has high hopes of changing the climbing stigma.

"We host a locals' day at Hound Ears to clean up around the boulders and have even helped Grandfather

Have Crash Pad, Will Climb.

Check out these 10 High Country Classics in the Boone area!

GRANDMOTHER BOULDERS

- MIGHTY MOUSE – V5
- SHARK FIN ARÊTE – V3
- HOT ROD – V8
- AGAINST THE GRAIN – V6

BOULDERS AT LOST COVE

- PUSSYFOOT – V7
- BIG BERTHA – V10
- MATT'S PROWL – V8

221 BOULDERS

- FOUR HORSEMEN AND THE APOCALYPSE – V7

BLOWING ROCK BOULDERS

- CLASSIC ARÊTE – V6
- CENTER 45 – V3

photo by TOMMY PENICK

with trail repair, even though we'll probably never have access to any of the boulders there," he says. "We do it so people can see what good people climbers are."

Between trail days, kids' clinics, and even plans for a bouldering gym (at the hands of Parlier) it's hard to imagine where Boone's reputation for being clandestine and territorial could have originated. For 21-year-old App State student and boulderer Carson Bakker, that aloof attitude toward out-of-towners was something he never encountered.

"Personally, I think it's kinda cool that you have to strike up conversation to find the climbing," Bakker says in regards to the guidebook, or lack thereof. "When I think about Boone climbing, there's something about the thought of people showing up with a nose in a

VOCAB

BETA (n): information about certain moves or holds that will increase your chances in sending a problem

CRIMP (vb): to grip using primarily the fingertips with knuckles raised

CRUX (n): the most difficult part of the problem

DEADPOINT (n; vb): to catch a hold at the peak of upward motion; this is the point where the climber will experience the least force

DYNO (n; vb): the abbreviation for "dynamic movement," a move that requires an increase in momentum or power

ELVIS LEG (n): the uncontrollable shake of a leg during a climb, usually from a combination of nerves and muscle fatigue; also referred to as "sewing machine leg"

GRADE (n): an approximate measure of the technical difficulty of a route or problem

HEEL HOOK (n; vb): a climbing technique involving the use of a heel to pull down like a third arm

HIGHBALL (n): a very high boulder problem, often with a hard landing

MANTEL (n; vb): a climbing technique involving the transfer of upward force from a pulling action to a pushing action, often used to "top out" problems

MATCH (vb): to place both hands or feet on the same hold

MONO (n): shortened from the French word "monodoigt" meaning a pocket big enough for "one finger"

OFFWIDTH (n; vb): a crack that is neither wide enough to fit the whole body nor narrow enough to hand jam

ONSIGHT (n; vb): a clean ascent without falling or prior knowledge of the problem's beta

OVERHANGING (adj): used to describe a face or boulder that protrudes at an angle that is less than 90 degrees

PROBLEM (n): the equivalent of a "route" on a boulder

PUMPED (adj): synonym for tired; used to describe forearms that are swollen, spent, and unresponsive

REDPPOINT (n; vb): a clean ascent without falling after having already tried to climb a problem

SEND (vb): to successfully complete a route

SIT START (n; vb): the beginning of a boulder problem that requires the climber to sit on the ground, which often adds a degree of difficulty to the problem

SLOPER (n): a rounded, downward "sloping" hold

SMEAR (n; vb): the act of placing a large surface area of shoe rubber on a hold to create maximum friction

SPOTTER (n): a friend or fellow climber who aids in moving crash pads and straight landings should a climber fall

TRaverse (n; vb): lateral movement across a problem or section of a problem

V-SCALE (n): the grading system used specifically for boulder problems; the scale ranges from V0 to V15



ABOVE: SINCE PARLIER PUBLISHED THE FIRST GUIDEBOOK TO BOULDERING IN GRAYSON HIGHLANDS, THE NUMBER OF PROBLEMS ESTABLISHED HAS MORE-THAN DOUBLED. LEFT: AARON PARLIER PREPARES TO SEND A NEWLY DEVELOPED PROBLEM IN THE PARK.

photos by JESS DADDIO



guidebook that doesn't sit well with myself or the majority of climbers here."

Respectful and diligent, proactive and persistent, climbers in Boone may be protective of their boulders, yes, but with good reason. If the place you love to play had a history sprinkled with bulldozers and dynamite, you'd probably be willing to strap yourself to a tree to

protect it, right?

"We have these great climbing areas but we know they might not be permanent," Bakker says. "We know we have to act a certain way and treat those areas with respect or they might not be there forever."

So what does the future hold for Boone and its boulders? For now, it's simply a matter of maintaining access to the major boulder fields

where climbing is permitted, namely 221 Boulders, Lost Cove, Grandmother Mountain, and Blowing Rock. For climbers with a knack for adventure and the willingness to stray off the beaten path, there are plenty of undeveloped boulders, especially down in the Linville Gorge and Watauga River Gorge where access can be cumbersome but is free and open to the public.

Grounded on the principle of work hard, play hard, bouldering in Boone celebrates the ambitious. But the Golden Age of bouldering is far from over in this mountain town.

Local climber Rami Annab recently snagged the first ascent of one of the community's longstanding problems, a 30-foot, V11 highball dubbed The World is Not Enough. His accomplishment, revered even by the original Boone climbers, echoes Fuelling's sentiment that, if you're willing to put in the time to earn it, the jewel of the High Country can be yours. *



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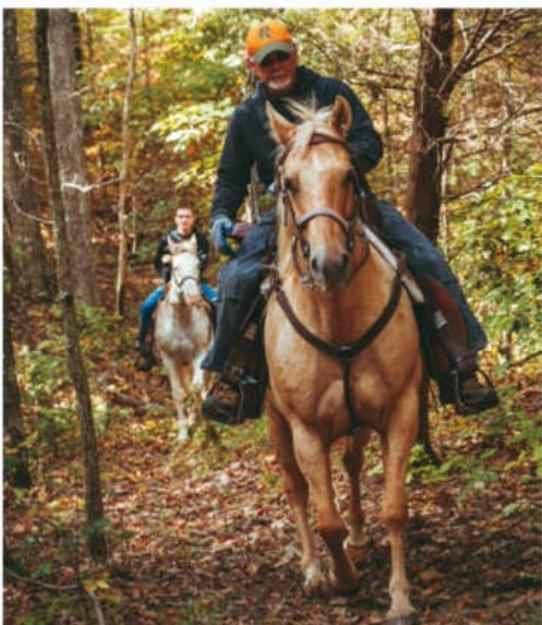
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Kentucky State Parks can be great home bases as you experience Kentucky's outdoors. Forty-nine state parks, including 17 resorts with lodge accommodations, blanket the Commonwealth. Many of the parks offer numerous soft adventures, and just outside the gates a variety of world-class extreme adventures beckon.

Trails in Kentucky come in all shapes and sizes. As pioneers and settlers moved westward, many traveled to and through Kentucky. Places like the Cumberland Gap and the Wilderness Road were vital to American expansion. Now, these historically significant trails have evolved into a recreational trail system that totals over 12,000 miles. Whether you are looking for a month-long backpacking adventure or a short Sunday afternoon stroll Kentucky has a trail for you.

One way to find your way to these trails is through the Kentucky Trail Town destinations. These towns are located near or along major trail systems and offer services to visitors. For example, the community of Livingston sits along the state's longest trail system, the 269-mile Sheltowee Trace National Recreation Trail. Search trail towns on Kentuckytourism.com to find the complete list.

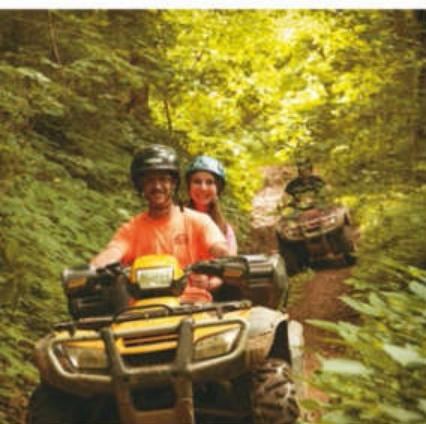
Kentucky is the Horse Capital of the World, which means fabulous trail riding for equine enthusiasts. Horse camps across the Commonwealth connect horse and rider into some of the best trail systems around. Many stables offer the opportunity for trail riding if you don't have your own horse.



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Those looking to pedal their way around have plenty of options in Kentucky as well. Mountain bikers will find great single track, and road cyclists are sure to enjoy one of the dozens of popular paved routes. Everyone can find a route that matches their level of expertise. Meanwhile, southeastern Kentucky is growing into one of the top destinations for ATVs and off-road vehicles in the country. Thousands of miles have been developed on reclaimed mine lands and wooded forests. The views from atop these popular ATV parks are sure to make you come back again and again.

Adventures are happening in Kentucky high above and far below ground. From treetop canopy tours to the largest cave system in the world, there are plenty of ways to explore Kentucky. Mammoth Cave National Park preserves the world's longest mapped cave system (400+ miles) and guided tours are given daily. Above ground, the park preserves the Green River valley and provides lots of opportunities to explore nature. The Red River Gorge has some of the best climbing routes in the country and attracts thousands of altitude seekers each year. Mega Cavern in Louisville features the world's only underground zipline, as well as a challenge course and bike park. Climb up high or delve down below to truly experience all the adventure in Kentucky.

Kentucky has thousands of miles of navigable water flowing through it and there are plenty of ways to get out and enjoy a water adventure. Whether you're looking for a high-adrenaline whitewater rush through the Russell Fork in gorgeous Breaks Interstate Park, or a nice afternoon paddle down a quiet stream, we've got more than enough options to get on the water. Anglers and boaters will find an abundance of fish to pursue.

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There's no question Kentucky offers some of the best in outdoor recreation. Many activities require specialized gear or knowledge to be fully enjoyed. Not to worry, since outfitters and guide services for all outdoor activities are ready to assist in your adventure. Shuttle services, retail stores, repair shops and gear rental will have you on the trail or in the water in no time.

It's now up to you...pick your adventure, select your Kentucky destination and let the fun begin. Visit www.kentuckytourism.com.



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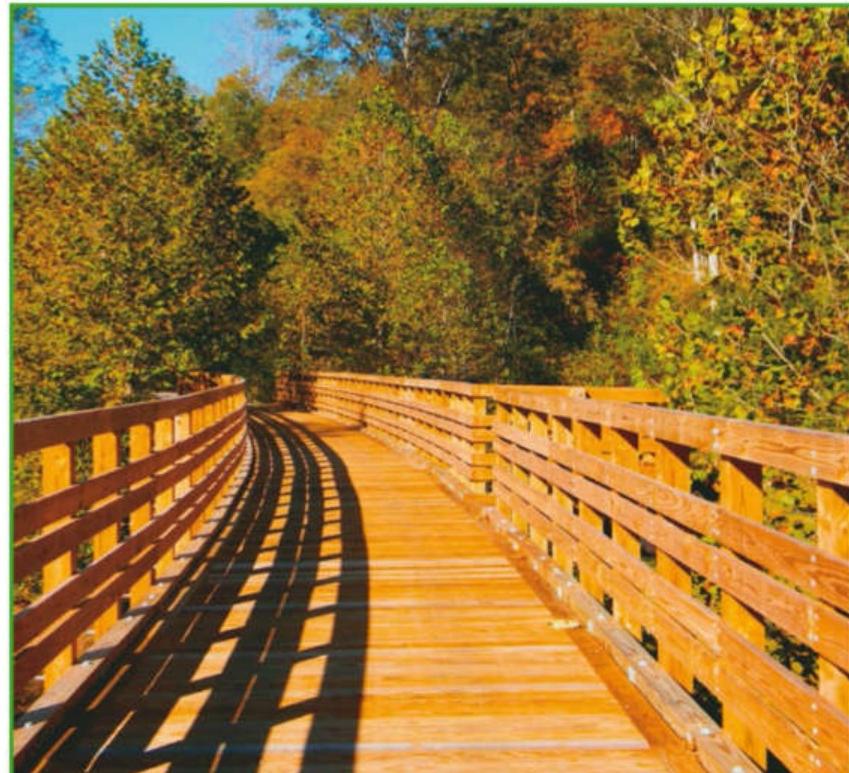
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GEAR THAT ROCKS

THE SCOTT BROTHERS' BOULDERING ESSENTIALS

by GRAHAM AVERILL

IT'S A GOOD THING KELSEY AND CONNOR SCOTT PAID ATTENTION DURING HIGH SCHOOL HOME EC. The brothers moved to Chattanooga to be closer to the climbing and bouldering and quickly decided they needed to build a better chalk bag. Using their mom's sewing machine, some scrap fabric, and the minimal sewing skills they picked up in Home Economics, the brothers crafted their first chalk bags. Five years later, the Scotts have a legit outdoor gear and apparel business called Granola, specializing in handmade chalk bags and backpacks. "I read *Let My People Go Surfing* and was feeling pretty pumped after that," says older brother Kelsey Scott, of their decision to turn a hobby into a gear business. And Kelsey is still pumped, particularly since he and his brother just signed a deal with Diamond Brand that will increase the production and distribution of Granola, while still allowing them to perform R&D and testing in Chattanooga.



We asked the brothers to name their five favorite pieces of gear for a bouldering session. Here's what they came up with.

NO. 1 CHACO UPDRAFT ECOTREAD

These are our approach shoes. In the fall and winter, we convert them into "Sacos" for bouldering. You don't have to tie your shoes from boulder to boulder. It's a pain in the ass to tie your shoes. \$95

NO. 2 PETZL TIKKA +

We always take headlamps. That's key, so you can keep climbing until dark and then hike out without breaking an ankle. \$39.95

NO. 3 ICE BREAKER OASIS LONG SLEEVE CREWE

They're warm in the winter, but also really breathable because of the Merino wool. Most importantly, you can wear them for three days straight and they don't reek as bad as polyester. \$100

NO. 4 STANLEY STEEL FLASK

This might be the most important piece of gear. We always fill it with bourbon before we go out. It's ideal for bouldering season, when it's 40 degrees and you need a little burn. We can't leave the house without it. \$18

NO. 5 GRANOLA CHALK BAG

Every one of these bags is a little unique because we use different colors and patterns. And the fleece on the inside is made out of recycled soda bottles, and it's really warm in the winter. \$26

EDITOR'S CHOICE

NO. 6 DEUTER AIRLITE 22

A lightweight, efficient all-purpose pack that's perfect for bouldering sessions or day hiking. \$109; deuter.com

EDITOR'S CHOICE

NO. 7 OBOZ SUNDOG

The Sundog provides aggressive traction from 4mm deep lugs yet flexes naturally and has a light feel for the ground. \$100

EDITOR'S CHOICE

NO. 8 BRIDGEDALE SPEED TRAIL SOCKS

These are our go-to socks for race day on trails. The Merino ventilated socks handle water and grit like a champ. \$19.95

EDITOR'S CHOICE

NO. 9 TERNUA JANNU

This form-fitting jacket is featherweight, windproof, and downproof, constructed with top-of-the-line Pertex Quantum fabric and insulation originally developed for U.S. Special Forces. Its Polartec stretch side mesh and fill offers comfortable insulation and superior freedom of movement for winter adventure. \$220



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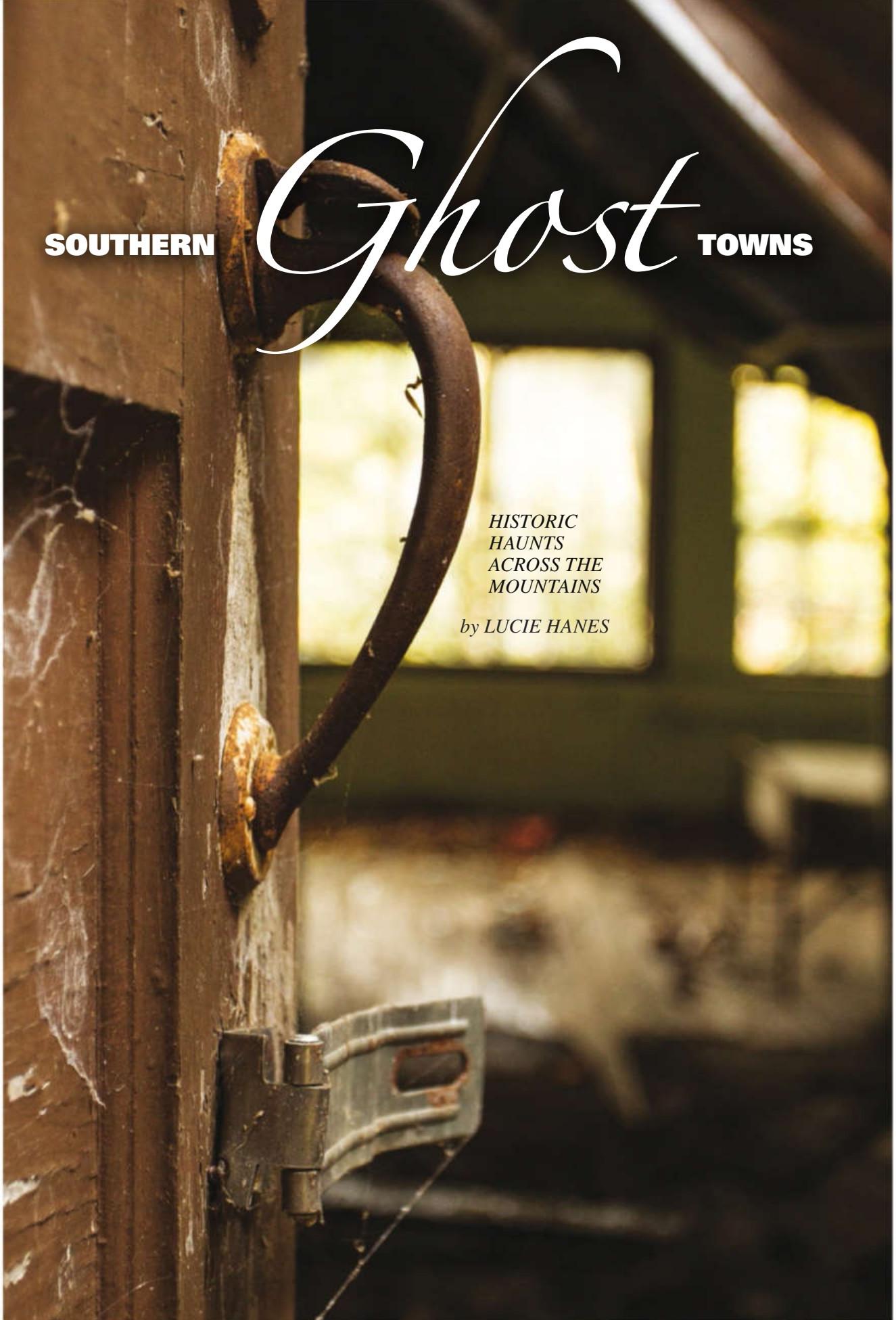
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SOUTHERN

Ghost TOWNS

HISTORIC
HAUNTS
ACROSS THE
MOUNTAINS

by LUCIE HANES

There's a lot to learn from big cities with active crowds and busy intersections. Hiding underneath all that hustle and bustle, though, lies yet another lifetime of information on places that only exist as shadows of their former glory. Ghost towns are civilizations that thrived in a different era, but met their match somewhere along the way. Most of the time, these places haven't disappeared completely; instead they feature broken-down hints of more fruitful times. Throughout the Blue Ridge, ghost towns stand in various states of ruin and restoration. A few are celebrated as historical gems, and others remain mysterious. Many of them are open for exploration. Here are a few of the region's most iconic ghost towns.

THURMOND, WEST VIRGINIA

The New River Gorge in West Virginia attracts adventurers from all over the Blue Ridge, thanks to its sheer abundance of premium whitewater and sandstone. These prospects alone make this National River an essential destination for anyone with merely an inkling of outdoor enthusiasm, but the area gets even more interesting when we take a look at its history.

Once upon a time, before its sporting opportunities or its picturesque steel arch bridge reached their present level of fame, the Gorge was a hub for all things coal. Thurmond, a name that today's paddlers likely associate with the access point for the Upper section of the New River, used to hold greater significance as a regional economic champion. According to the National Park Service, which now owns Thurmond's land, the town became the most popular stop on the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad by

the early 20th century and gathered the largest revenue along the entire railway. Thurmond obviously didn't retain this success, due mainly to a combination of the Great Depression and the railroad's switch from coal to diesel fuel. Without those crucial coal sales, the town failed.

Thurmond's past achievements are hard to believe today, when that booming population is nowhere to be seen anymore. The National Park Service, however, has worked to preserve many of the town's buildings so that people like former Lewisburg, WV resident Elizabeth Wilson can appreciate Thurmond as an "untouched sliver of American history". The restored remnants of Thurmond make this ghost town an easy one to visit and explore, so don't forget to fit this into your rest day plans at the NRG.

BLUE HERON, KENTUCKY

Like Thurmond, Blue Heron once paved its way as a riverside coal-mining town. A branch of the Stearns Coal and Lumber Company settled along Kentucky's Big South Fork River in 1937, by the National Park Service's records, and established Mine 18 that would then support a large community of rural miners and their families. After thirty years the company began to lose profits and chose to move elsewhere. Without the work or income that the mine provided, Blue Heron's occupants soon followed suit.

The National Park Service has also kept Blue Heron as an historical site, but in a different way than with Thurmond. None of Blue Heron's original buildings still exist after years of decay, which led the NPS to represent them in the form of exposed metal shells modeled after the actual structures. Each of the models makes up part of the Blue Heron Mining Community outdoor museum, which visitors can walk through to get an idea of what used to thrive there and to hear recordings of the town's old inhabitants. Visitors can easily access

Blue Heron by train from Stearns, KY. A 6.5 mile trail, called the Blue Heron Loop, begins at the site and offers an extended tour of the ghost town's outer limits.

MATILDAVILLE, VIRGINIA

The name of this ghost town certainly rolls off the tongue, but apparently that wasn't enough to keep it on the map. Matildaville came about during George Washington's grand plan to construct a canal around the Virginia side of Great Falls, so the NOVA History Notes state. The town's first residents began to settle by the falls around the end of the 18th century, throughout the early stages of planning for the future Potomac Canal. The idea was for Matildaville to sit along the riverbank next to where the canal basin would soon be built, so that it could serve as a commercial stop for the passing ships.

In all likelihood, that would have made for a tremendous pairing had Washington's idea actually worked. The Potomac Canal didn't pan out as intended, because even the President can't control nature. Water levels in the area were ultimately too low to sustain a full-time canal.

No Potomac Canal ultimately meant no Matildaville, since the town was only built to align with the river plans. The Great Falls Manufacturing Company later tried to give the land new life in the mid 1800s, but failed to get business moving without the canal in place. Without much reason to stick around anymore after all that misplaced effort, Matildaville's tired residents finally headed elsewhere. The ghost town is now part of Great Falls National Park, and the old main road has become a trail that provides hikers with a special front-row view of the ruins.

ELKO TRACT, VIRGINIA

Elko Tract has an especially fascinating history because it has more than one tale to tell. This small ghost town outside of Richmond

was once a run-of-the-mill farming community in rural Virginia, but Henrico Monthly reporter Rich Griset talks about a time during World War II when the U.S.

military took over the area as part of an elaborate battle scheme. The plan involved leveling the town and turning it into an entirely fake air force base, complete with imitation buildings and runways, as a means of distracting their enemy from the real location nearby. The military then took down the temporary structures after the war and left no remains.

However, Elko Tract as it exists today does in fact feature a number of ruins. Where did that water tower come from, and why these aimless roads?

Cue part two of the story, in which the state began to build an African-American mental hospital on the former military land. The government pulled its funding for the project less than halfway through, but not before that water tower, a sewage treatment plant, and a basic road system already stood strong. These pieces of the old plan still hold their ground in the backyard of the Richmond International Airport. Put the breaks on visiting Elko for now—word is that the road leading to the town is blocked off and thoroughly marked with No Trespassing signs. Instead, to quench a little curiosity, try to spot the water tower peeking above the trees just east of RIC.

SHERWOOD FOREST, VIRGINIA

Didn't anybody tell these people not to leave their pirate ship just lying around? Looks like its former captain, the Renaissance Entertainment Corporation, abandoned it alone in the woods among the trees and castles. What a waste.

This old ship has been hiding away near Fredericksburg, Virginia, says journalist Pablo Maurer. It's part of a Renaissance Fair that once occupied what locals called the Sherwood Forest, a patch of land that actually

dates back to the Washington family. The fair was only in operation from 1996 to 1999. The REC apparently didn't have the finances to hold it up, so they headed off in search of more prosperous ventures and left pretty much the whole camp behind.

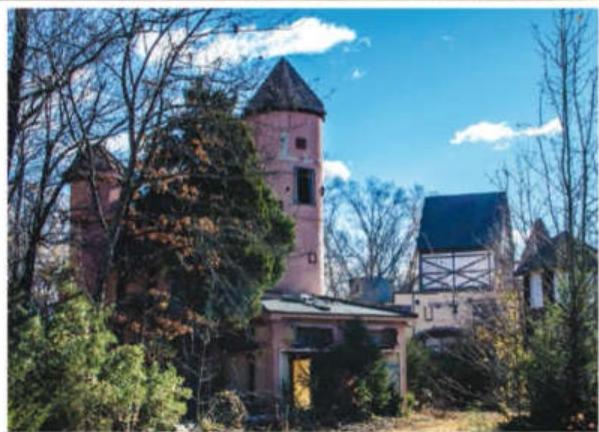
Castles, signs, shops, and—of course—the pirate ship, all remain in relatively good condition, considering the 16 years that have passed since the fair last had a paying customer. It's best to appreciate Sherwood Forest through pictures, though, because this is another location that it is very much against the law to visit. You've been warned.

ELKMONT, TENNESSEE

The remains of Elkmont are still standing today because of the very thing that brought this ghost town to its knees in the first place: the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Elkmont was born to Tennessee in the early 1900's as the headquarters for the Appalachian Club, according to representatives of GSMNP. The club consisted of a group of affluent Blue Ridge families, who built cabins and a clubhouse for themselves on the Elkmont land. It soon became a highly desirable retreat site for those with enough money and prestige to snag the opportunity.

But pretty soon, the plan for a national park in the Smokies began to catch fire. In order for the park to exist, Elkmont had to close its doors and sell the land to the state government. Members of the community managed to pull off the deal, and even worked out life lease agreements in the process.

The Appalachian Club is now part of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The National Park Service has worked with the National Register of Historic Places to protect the area and to make restoration plans for 19 of its buildings. Elkmont is easily accessible by way of the up and running Elkmont campground, reportedly one of the most popular camping spots in the park.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A HEARTH FROM THE CLUBHOUSE AT ELMONT, WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY AN AFFLUENT RETREAT BEFORE BECOMING PART OF GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK; THURMOND WAS A POPULAR RAILROAD STOP BEFORE IT BECAME SYNONYMOUS WITH A NEW RIVER GORGE PADDLING ACCESS POINT; AN ABANDONED RENAISSANCE-THEMED CASTLE SITS ON PRIVATE LAND OUTSIDE OF FREDERICKSBURG, VA.; ELLENTON, S.C. WAS RAZED TO BUILD A HYDROGEN BOMB FACILITY THAT IS NOW PART OF THE SAVANNAH RIVER SITE.

NO BUSINESS, TENNESSEE

Yes, you read that right. The people who first came here must have known that their settlement was doomed from the start. Whether No Business' pioneers meant this ominous title as a threat to others or as a comment on their own tough luck, it sure doesn't sound promising. This ghost town seems to have lived up to its name.

But at one point in time, as the National Park Service helps us to remember, No Business actually had a fair amount of business. The town began to boom throughout the turn of the 19th century, when a man named Richard Slaven organized a community there on land that the government granted him after the Revolutionary War. No Business ended up lasting for almost two centuries beyond that, and became a rather populated place considering the general seclusion of the area.

Eventually that isolation began

to take a toll and drove No Business, well, out of business. The remains of No Business—just piles of stone ruins, mainly—are quite hard to find, which goes to show just how removed this town really was. With a good bit of effort and some solid walking shoes, you can reach No Business by the Big South Fork River near Station Camp.

LOST COVE, NORTH CAROLINA

Lost Cove, another fitting name for a town of the past. The Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservatory recently bought this land and is working on including it as part of the Pisgah National Forest. This old river town, the SAHC explains, had developed during the Civil War era and started out as an agricultural community with a little illicit moonshining on the side. The railroad arrived a couple decades later, which helped transform Lost Cove into

a modest hot spot for logging and mining business.

Unfortunately for Lost Cove's newfound success, that business boom didn't last for long. Uncle Johnny's Nolichucky Hostel, a nearby traveler's lodge, claims that Lost Cove eventually fizzled in the 1950's after the same railroad that helped them thrive began to breeze past the town instead. Without a reliable train system, the area turned out to be too remote for comfort or sustainability.

For now, Lost Cove is only accessible by hike on the Lost Cove Trail off of Flat Top Road near Burnsville, NC. The Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservatory also organizes guided hiking trips to the ghost town along this trail.

ELLENTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

The people of Ellenton loved their home so much that they wrote a play about it. Really. The best way to understand what happened at

Ellenton, a ghost town near Aiken County in South Carolina, is to take a look at the script of "I Don't Live There Anymore: The Ellenton Story" by Lawrence Holofcener.

The play is set in 1950, when Ellenton's citizens discover that the government needs to clear out their town in order to build a hydrogen bomb development site there. It is a true story, based on the experience of an uprooted society.

Most of Ellenton was razed to the ground during the transition, as per the play's historical background information, so there are mainly only curbs, driveways, road signs, and concrete debris to serve as a desolate reminder of that community. Most of that is also off-limits and secured behind the walls of the Westinghouse Savannah River Site, an environmental research program that took the place of the nuclear zone. *

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DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS STILL ROLLING

WITH EPIC LIVE ALBUM

by JEDD FERRIS

As Patterson Hood sings the chorus in “The Righteous Path,” a hard-hitting standout from the Drive-By Truckers’ new sprawling 35-track live album, his gravelly voice sounds a little more weathered than usual. Not that the wear and tear hasn’t been well earned. Hood is now 51 and he’s been fronting the Truckers alongside his main songwriting foil Mike Cooley for just shy of 20 years. In the two decades since the band emerged from Athens, Ga., it has played approximately 2,000 shows, released 10 studio albums, and had 14 different members. Impossible to calculate but no less relevant to the experience are the number of relentless road miles between gigs, Jack Daniels bottles killed onstage, or the eardrums permanently damaged at the band’s rowdy, deafeningly loud rock shows.

It's Great to Be Alive!, which will be released on October 30, comes across as a grand retrospective that celebrates the Truckers’ scrappy

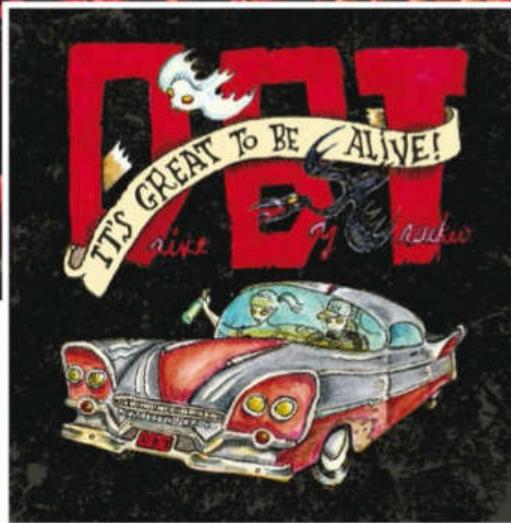
longevity, despite some turmoil. Culled from a three-night stand at the legendary Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco, the effort finds Hood and Cooley trading tunes that touch every part of the band’s impressively prolific discography.

Through the years various line-ups have adjusted the band’s Southern rock sound—a mix of big distorted anthems, twangy thought-provoking ballads and even some of the dusty soul from Hood’s upbringing in Alabama as the son of the bassist of the famed Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section. The common thread, however, has always been Hood and Cooley’s vivid lyrics, which illustrate with brutal honesty many hard-to-swallow aspects of life in the South.

That’s on full display in the new live set, as Hood revisits “The Living Bubba,” a tragic story song about a bar musician with AIDS who finds the will to live through his nightly shows that first surfaced on the Truckers’ primitive 1998 debut *Gangstabilly*. Cooley shines

on the band’s more recent material, particularly the politically charged “English Oceans,” where he tells the crowd a story about growing up in Alabama and remembering being embarrassed when a visit from then-President Jimmy Carter to his hometown was interrupted by the KKK.

Make no mistake: the Truckers’ lead songwriters are both proud of where they come from. You can hear it when Hood gets personal looking back at his 1999 song “Box of Spiders,” written for his grandparents. But they’ve also never been willing to sugarcoat the region’s shortcomings. The Truckers’ critical breakout came after the 2001 release of *Southern Rock Opera*, a two-disc concept album about growing up in the South, creatively filtered through reverence for Lynyrd Skynyrd. Hood referenced the album in July when he wrote a poignant op-ed in the *New York Times Magazine* about the Confederate Flag controversy that followed the tragic mass shooting at the Emanuel



African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C.

“The album wrestled with how to be proud of where we came from while acknowledging and condemning the worst parts of our region’s history,” he wrote, while also elaborating on his craft. “As a songwriter, I’ve spent the better part of my career trying to capture both the Southern storytelling tradition and the details the tall tales left out, putting this dialectical narrative into the context of rock songs.”

That sums up what’s destined to be the band’s cemented legacy, something worth noting at a time when the group finally seems to have a comfortable roster. The band has admitted to internal discord as notable members have come and gone through the years, including Americana tunesmith Jason Isbell, who wrote some of the band’s most popular songs during his six-year tenure.

These days, though, the Truckers play as a lean five-piece outfit that is arguably its tightest incarnation. Hood and Cooley handle the guitars with steadfast drummer Brad Morgan behind the kit. Spunky bassist Matt Patton holds down the low end, and the unsung hero is keyboardist Jay Gonzalez, who shines on *It's Great to Be Alive!* by easing the intensity of the distortion with gospel-hued organ accents, funky vamps, and airy piano fills.

The new album closes with “Grand Canyon.” The song is a moving elegy for Craig Lieske, a band crew member who passed away suddenly of a heart attack in 2013. It’s meditative and melodic, persisting for more than 13 minutes before patiently reaching a crashing peak that tapers off into piercing single note of feedback. When Hood sings the line, “Lug our sorrows, pains and angers and turn them into play,” it’s a reminder that even with some age on the wheels, his band is still finding creative ways to roll with the punches. *



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